THE UNIVERSITY OF JORDAN SERIALS DIVISION

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية «الرأي»

Volume 18 Number 5481 | AMMAN TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1993, JUMADA AL THANI 23, 1414 | Price: 150 Fils

Israel, PLO economic chiefs meet

PARIS (R)— Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) economic chief Ahmad Quriea met in Paris Monday for talks on Palestinian economic self-rule, delegation officials said. The meeting was part of negotiations on the economic aspects of the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area due to begin next week. An Israeli spokesman said the atmosphere was excellent but the two sides had agreed not to disclose details. However, diplomats said the Palestinians, concerned to assert a national identity and fearing Israeli economic dominance, were resisting Israeli proposals for a completely open market between the Jewish state and the self-governing Palestinian territories. "For the moment, politics seems to be dominating economics,' said one diplomat familiar with the discussions. Another source said the talks were being conducted "in the conditional tense" because it was not clear whether the Palestinian leadership would accept a customs union with Israel. Mr. Quriea has been appointed director-general of the Palestinian Economic Development Council which is to administer the economy of the self-governing areas and manage international aide.

Arafat, Peres to meet in Spain

PARIS (AP) — Palestine leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres are expected to meet this week in Spain for the first time since the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace was signed in September. The U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) said both men had accepted invitations to attend an international symposium called "peace, The Day After," to be held Thursday and Friday in Granada. "We've just learned that Mr. Arafat is coming and it will be the first meeting between him and Peres since their handshake in Washington," said UNESCO's spokeswoman, Elke Salas. Mr. Peres had previously confirmed his attendance, according to UNESCO, however, the Israeli foreign ministry said Monday it was not sure of his plans. "In a communique, UNESCO said the Granada symposium's goal is to establish a free and fruitful dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian intellectuals." Participants will "exchange views on how a common future could be shaped in the Middle East," UNESCO said. "They will also discuss the moral and intellectual requirements for transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace."

His Majesty King Hussein and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher Monday hold talks attended by top-level delegations (Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Peace only after all issues solved — King

Christopher acknowledges Aqaba siege; talks focused more on economic aspects

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein said Monday Jordan was seeking to address all the topics included in the agenda it has signed with Israel and that peace would come after these issues have been resolved.

Addressing a press conference after talks with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, the King said "considerable ground" had been covered in the quest for peace, but much work remained to be done.

"I believe in the need to continue positive movement towards peace as much as we can," the King said. "Our view has been, and will be, that peace should come as a crowning achievement after resolving all these problems."

The talks Mr. Christopher held with King Hussein and other officials here after arriving here from Syria (see page 10) appeared to have focused more on economic aspects of the peace process rather than the nitty-gritty political details of the peace negotiations.

Mr. Christopher, echoing a theme that appeared to have been given new emphasis during his current Middle East troubleshooting mission, said all parties involved in the peace process could reap the benefits of a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement.

Dwelving for the first time in public into issues of substance that he discussed in Jordan, Mr. Christopher acknowledged that Jordan was facing severe economic consequences from the de facto blockade on Aqaba port as a result of the international sanctions against Iraq.

"We take back to Washington a very strong need to address this issue and to recognise that the blockade is inflicting severe consequences on Jordan of an unintended kind," he said.

On another level, he said, the Clinton administration had started "consultations on Capitol Hill" on aid to Jordan. He did not give any details.

Sources have said that Jordan was expecting Washington to write off its nearly $1 billion debts to the U.S.

Mr. Christopher elaborated on the theme of economic benefits from the peace process.

"We discussed investment issues, trade issues and a tremendous promise of tourism to this area which would create hundreds of thousands of jobs."

He said the meeting discussed "a number of options, like the possible calling of conference in the trade and investment areas."

"This is a simple idea in the process of exploration," Mr. Christopher said, without disclosing any details.

Mr. Christopher said that U.S. military cooperation with Jordan would also be stepped up next year.

The Amman talks covered progress in the U.S.-mediated Jordanian-Israeli economic cooperation talks.

On a possible delay to the December 13 target for agreement on an Israeli army withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho, Mr. Christopher said it was up to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel.

"Israelis and Palestinians will be the best source of information as to whether any delay is necessary and how much delay," he said. "I think they are anxious to proceed.

"What I heard from (Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin was a sense of the importance of staying on the overall targets set down "in the Israeli-PLO autonomy accord, he said.

The United States is committed to a comprehensive peace in the region, the secretary of state stressed, cautioning against complacency although progress was being made.

"In an overall sense, we are certainly not losing ground, we are gaining ground. But having said that, I am not at all complacent. I think everyone here understands that we must reach agreements as soon as possible," he said.

"But they must be good agreements."

"I think the difficulties that have taken place in the last several days in the occupied territories are a reminder of the need to move with determination."

While in Amman Mr. Christopher also held talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

Mr. Christopher, later held a meeting with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat at the American embassy in Amman. He left for Israel after that meeting.

His Majesty King Hussein and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher hold a joint press conference Monday (Photo by Rana Husseini)

Deputies continue to level charges, criticism at Cabinet in Parliament

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Opposition deputies Monday pelleted the government with criticism while those who support it defended its policy and praised its achievements on the second day of debate on a vote of confidence in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali.

Criticism of the government centred on what many deputies called the undemocratic practices of the Cabinet, its disrespect for the legislature, discrimination among citizens and participation in the peace process.

While some deputies praised the abilities and records of Dr. Majali and his ministerial team, others asserted that the prime minister and his Cabinet members were incapable of rising up to the challenges facing the country.

The issues that dominated the first day of the confidence session on Sunday also occupied the major parts of the speeches of the 22 deputies who took the floor during the debate that lasted into the early hours of the evening.

Though the government came under more fire from deputies who castigated its dissolution of Parliament and unilateral changes of the Election Law, there were no indications that it will not be able to win a vote of confidence.

Most observers and deputies said the Cabinet will win the confidence of the deputies, but its mandate will be very limited as not more than 45 deputies are expected to vote in its favour.

Deputies will prove disloyal to their electorate if "they give a vote of confidence to this government which has demonstrated that its (style) of government has nothing to do with democracy," Deputy Toujan Faisal (Amman Third District) said in a speech full of criticism of the government and its record.

While many lawmakers spoke in support of the Cabinet's decentralisation programme, Ms. Faisal, Jordan's first female deputy, attacked the programme as a flawed practice that would consolidate the power of the Ministry of Interior and its employees, the administrative rulers.

Ms. Faisal also accused the government of irregularities during the Nov. 8 polls, claiming the elections would not have been honest had it not been for the "care" of His Majesty King Hussein.

Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputies joined Ms. Faisal in attacking the decentralisation programme of the Cabinet saying it would give more power to administrative rulers at the expense of elected councils in the governorates and cities of the Kingdom.

Three IAF deputies who spoke Monday attacked the government's participation in the peace negotiations and demanded that the country withdraw from them.

They said the peace talks would constitute a recognition of the "Jewish" occupation of Arab land and people and condemned the Jordan-Israel agenda for peace negotiations as a prelude to the normalisation of relations with Israel.

Such a development, they said, would lead to "Jewish" cultural, economic and political dominance of the Muslim Nation. They said the official media were promoting the peace process and warned against "developing" school curricula in a way that would pave the way for normalisation of relations with Israel.

"The policy statement mentioned the Jews as the sons of Abraham and not as the enemies," IAF Deputy Bassam Amoush (Zarqa) said, expressing rejection of the Gaza-Jericho accord and the Jordan-Israel agenda and warning against Israeli plans to build "a substitute homeland" in Jordan for the Palestinians.

Other lawmakers, however, endorsed the participation in the peace process provided they lead to a just and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

IAF deputies were among other lawmakers who emphasised the need for strengthening national unity and ensuring equal rights for all citizens. They said, however, that the government's practices had worked to weaken rather than strengthen unity among citizens.

Deputies said the government has practised favouritism and nepotism in the employment of civil servants, reserving certain positions, especially in the foreign service, to select segments of society.

The IAF deputies said they were also withholding confidence from the government because it had not indicated its willingness to move towards the implementation of Islam in Jordan.

They called on the government to improve its ties with the Muslim and Arab worlds because the "division" of the nation has weakened the Arabs and Muslims before their enemies.

Similar demands were made by other deputies who said Jordan has always worked to improve ties among Arabs.

Any improvement of relations with Arab Gulf states, however, should not be accompanied with any "concessions that harm the interests of the country, (and better ties) with Saudi Arabia should not come at the expense of keeping the sanctions against Iraq," said Deputy Rateb Al Saud (Tafileh).

Common among the demands of the deputies were calls for fairness in ensuring university admission for all Jordanians, introduction of new taxes, keeping subsidies for basic goods and more effective policies in dealing with the problems of poverty and unemployment.

(Continued on page 10)

Arafat evasive on economy accord

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Monday described the talks he held Sunday night with His Majesty King Hussein as very warm and positive, but dodged a question when he would endorse a draft accord on economic cooperation between the planned interim Palestinian autonomous territory and the Kingdom.

Answering questions at a brief press conference at the U.S. embassy after meeting Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Mr. Arafat said Jordanian-Palestinian relations were "very strong" and did not depend on "signing an agreement here or an agreement there."

He cited a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation as the ultimate objective as endorsed in 1983 by the Palestine National Council (PNC), and implied that any agreement discussed or under review by six joint committees, including a panel on economic cooperation, was not a major factor as long as such a Jordanian-Palestinian relationship remained as the goal.

Informed PLO sources said Mr. Arafat's argument was that it was premature to finalise the draft economic agreement. His point is that the PLO "has only received promises and pledges and it has nothing in hand," and therefore has to hold out for "as much concrete assistance as possible" before committing himself into any accord.

Furthermore, Mr. Arafat also argues that any agreement with Jordan should be within the framework of a future confederation between two sovereign entities.

Jordanian officials have made no secret of their desire to have the document endorsed as soon as possible so that the Kingdom could go ahead with groundwork needed to assume supervision of the banking and currency affairs of the occupied territories.

The PLO sources said none of the "inner circle" of Arafat favoured the PLO chairman's quest for independent Palestinian monetary authorities to be set up during the interim five-year autonomy period in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"The dominant feeling among PLO experts is that no time should be wasted in signing the accord with Jordan if only because it would remove a lot of uncertainties from among Palestinians who are in a position and are willing to contribute materially and otherwise to building Palestinian economy," said a source close to the PLO chairman.

However, some of the Arafat aides agree with the argument of the PLO leader that he should not sign any agreement with any party lest such accords could be used by Israel to deny Palestinian nationhood.

But that point does not have any bearing on the economic accord, Jordanian officials say. They say that the principles included in the draft accord do not preclude Palestinian sovereignty and "leave all options open for the Palestinians," as one of them put it.

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Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Monday meets U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher at the American embassy residence in Amman (Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Arafat meets Christopher, insists on Dec. 13 deadline

By Lamis K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Monday insisted that there should not be any delay in the implementation of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy accord, but it appeared that he was waiting for Israeli responses to some conditions he sent through U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

He said Israel should pull out from Gaza Strip and Jericho next week and challenged Israeli leaders to take steps to enable the two sides to implement the historic accord signed in Washington on Sept. 13.

In a brief joint press conference after a meeting with Mr. Christopher, Mr. Arafat appeared unwilling to concede to Israel's demand to delay its pullout later than Dec. 13.

But the PLO chairman, who is said to be aware that deadline will not be met, was apparently trying to ensure that some kind of change takes place on the ground by Dec. 13 to maintain support for the process among the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Mr. Arafat appealed publicly to Mr. Christopher to help start an Israeli withdrawal next week.

The U.S. official stayed away, publicly at least, from siding with either side but promised to convey Mr. Arafat's view to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

But Mr. Christopher said that he has heard "the urgency that the chairman attaches to a prompt conclusion... and certainly when I see Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin I will pass on to him the concern that Chairman Arafat has."

Meanwhile in Israel Mr. Rabin seemed confident that the PLO would have to accept a two- or three- week delay.

"I am convinced that a delay of about two weeks to reach an accord on the application of the first phase, that is to say the Gaza and Jericho first, is something that is understood between the two sides," he said.

From the PLO viewpoint, according to Palestinian officials, if a delay takes place it will be a de facto delay dictated by Israel rather than an understanding between the two sides.

Although it was not possible last night to learn about the actual Arafat-Christopher talks, the statements indicated that Mr. Arafat had stuck to his guns and insisted that Israel address the sticking points to pave the way for the implementation of the accord on time.

He pointed out that the three stumbling blocs remained the dispute were over the Jericho area that will be included in Palestinian autonomy, the release of Palestinian political prisoners and Israeli withdrawal.

According to PLO officials, Mr. Arafat did not expect Israel to adhere to the deadline but was going to insist at least to start some sort of process on Dec. 13, even if by beginning with initial tiny steps.

"Something has to start on that date or else the situation could blow out of hand," said one PLO official. "A partial withdrawal or even the beginning of the return of PLO personnel could keep the momentum going."

In an attempt to fend the pressure on him to formally accept a delay, Mr. Arafat threw the ball back into the Israeli court holding Mr. Rabin responsible for obstructing the process.

Asked by a journalist if he was ready to show flexibility, Mr. Arafat shot back: 'This question should be asked to Mr. Rabin. He is the one who has to be flexible. He has the upper hand (because he is the one) occupying my land."

Sources close to the PLO leader said that he was seriously concerned that a delay, especially by his own consent, could undermine faith in the process and in the PLO among the Palestinians.

They said any sort of a symbolic beginning of the implementation, within a clear timetable of the actual withdrawal, could make a difference to Mr. Arafat's position.

Both Mr. Christopher and Mr. Arafat said that they discussed Palestinian preparations in terms of setting up the economic structures to receive the assistance.

Mr. Christopher made positive hints about the progress of the Palestinian preparations, but indicated that more key economic and political decisions need to be made by the Palestinians.

But he also pointed out that "credible structures were needed," in a strong allusion to the apparent lack of confidence in the way the PLO was setting up councils and committees.

Mr. Arafat is believed to have complained to Mr. Christopher about the delay of funds from donors who have pledged to finance the Palestinian autonomy.

Thus in his public statements Mr. Christopher responded that the Palestinians should first take key decisions and form the necessary structures. "Once these decisions are made, the international (community) can help more quickly," Mr. Christopher said.

But PLO officials said, that Mr. Arafat was unwilling to concede to donors' demands that he leave the decisions for experts and economists.

Two Palestinians and two settlers killed

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Palestinians killed two settlers and wounded three others after their car broke down near Hebron on the occupied West Bank Monday while Israeli soldiers killed a Palestinian elsewhere, military officials said.

All five hit in the attack at the settlement of Givat Habarsina were from the same family. A father and son were killed and three children wounded.

A 54-year-old Palestinian shot by settlers at the wheel of his car on Saturday in Hebron died on Sunday provoking calls for revenge.

Two Israelis were wounded in a firebomb attack on their bus in the occupied West Bank north of Jerusalem, security sources said.

The attack, near the village of Al Jib, occurred just two hours after the two settlers were killed.

The army announced a curfew had been clamped on Palestinians living in the Hebron area as dozens of angry settlers gathered at the site of Monday's killing.

Settlers pelted rocks at passing cars with Arab numberplates and turned several vehicles over, state radio reported.

Soldiers and journalists were insulted by the crowd.

A major manhunt was launched for the assailants.

"A car carrying passengers was standings, it's not clear why they were standing, whether because of a problem or to take passengers. Then terrorists opened fire," West Bank settler council spokes-

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A Palestinian woman and an Israeli soldier pass each other in a street of the West Bank town of Hebron Monday, a day of strike called by Islamic Jihad to mark the sixth anniversary of the intifada (AFP photo)

$127m pledged to UNRWA for 1994

AMMAN (J.T.) — Vienna Pledges of financial and in-kind contributions worth some $127 million to support the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for 1994 were announced at the annual pledging conference for UNRWA in New York on Friday. The conference was attended by the representatives of 38 countries, as well as the European Community (EC) and the Holy See.

The largest amount pledged to UNRWA for 1994 was $70 million from the United States, an increase over previous years. Sweden announced that it would return its contribution to the 1992 level of 146 million kroner, currently equal to some $17 million. Norway pledged some $9 million and Germany pledged nearly $6 million to UNRWA for 1994.

Denmark pledged some $5.6 million, including over $2.9 million for the general hospital which UNRWA is building in the Gaza Strip, while also pledging to continue underwriting the running costs of UNRWA's training centres at Ramallah in the West Bank. The Netherlands pledged some $4.7 million for 1994.

Switzerland announced a pledge combining cash and food assistance totalling some $6.7 million. France's pledge of nearly $3 million includes some $100,000 for the rehousing of displaced Palestinians in Lebanon.

Australia pledged some $2 million to UNRWA during its 1993-94 fiscal year ending in June, including a special contribution of some $200,000. The largest pledge from an Arab country was from Saudi Arabia, for $1.2 million in 1994.

The European Community, while not making a specific pledge for 1994, noted that its contribution to UNRWA would be substantially increased under the agreement it is about to conclude with the agency covering the period 1993-95. The EC would allocate some $111 million to UNRWA under that three-year agreement.

A number of countries which are normally among the largest donors to UNRWA attended the conference but were not able to announce pledges due to their governments' budgetary or parliamentary procedures. These included Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom, Finland and New Zealand.

Speaking at the conference, the delegate of Jordan underlined the direct contribution its government makes to the Palestine refugees through the provision of services and other facilities. The representative of Israel also pointed out that it provided services and facilities for refugees.

The representative of the United States expressed his government's appreciation for UNRWA's role in helping to create a climate for Middle East peace and expressed support for the continuing leadership of Commissioner-General Ilter Türkmen during this critical period in the region.

The pledging conference was opened by the president of the United Nations General Assembly, Ambassador Samuel R. Insanally of Guyana. He drew attention to UNRWA's 1994 budget requirements of some $294 million for core programmes under its General Fund and Funded Ongoing Activities, as well as an additional $14.7 million needed for construction and special projects.

In his statement, Mr. Insanally said it was essential that UNRWA's services should continue without interruption during the transitional period to Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Further, he said, the 1.7 million Palestine refugees living outside the occupied territory, in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, would also continue to need the assistance they have been receiving under UNRWA's education, health and relief and social service programmes.

Speaking at the end of the conference, UNRWA Commissioner-General Ilter Türkmen thanked delegations for their pledges and their expressions of support for the work of UNRWA and for agency staff. Mr. Türkmen said that international financial support in the first two years of the interim period in the West Bank and Gaza would be of critical importance.

Referring to the agency's efforts over the past year to overcome a serious shortfall in funding for its regular and emergency programmes, the commissioner-general said that the austerity measures taken by the Agency were having an impact on the quality of UNRWA's programmes and services to Palestine refugees. If funding were received even now for 1993, the most serious austerity measures would be unfrozen, he said, and salary scales for staff in certain areas of operation would be adjusted to take account of cost-of-living increases which were causing them hardship.

Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel on Sept. 13, Mr. Türkmen said, UNRWA had received strong expressions of support for its Peace Implementation Programme, which has identified some $100 million worth of short-term projects to improve services and infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Parallel to this, he said, UNRWA had also identified projects to upgrade facilities and improve services for Palestine refugees in the Agency's three other Fields of operation.

"The next few years will be crucial for the build-up towards a comprehensive and permanent settlement and lasting peace," Mr. Türkmen said. "In this period, UNRWA will still have a key role to play, in particular in the initial two or three years within the context of economic and social development in support of the peace process, not only in the West Bank and Gaza, but also in Jordan, lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. It can play this role only if it continues to enjoy the confidence and receive the support of donor countries," Mr. Türkmen concluded, (UNRWA press release).

Israel plans pullback despite problem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Israeli army has begun building fallback positions for a withdrawal in the occupied Gaza Strip despite snags in the peace accord for Palestinian self-rule and mounting violence.

"Yes, there are the first preparations," Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's spokesman Oded Ben-Ami told Reuters Sunday when asked about an Israel Television report on the work.

The television showed bulldozers ploughing through sandy hills and said they were levelling ground for new bases between Jewish settlements in the Strip.

Self-rule is set to begin there and in the West Bank town of Jericho on Dec. 13 but that deadline was cast into further doubt on Sunday.

It was not clear from the report or Mr. Ben-Ami's comments if the new positions met with Palestinian approval.

The extent of the Israeli withdrawal is one of the snags in talks aimed at ironing out the details of a self-rule in Gaza and Jericho, along with defining the Jericho area and who should control access from Egypt to Gaza and from Jordan to Jericho.

Under self-rule, Israeli troops would withdraw from Palestinian population centres and remain only to protect settlements. Palestinian police would replace them.

Palestinian negotiators at the talks have complained in the past that Israel intends more of a redeployment than withdrawal.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is still pressing publicly for the Dec. 13 deadline to be met.

But a PLO official in Amman said PLO leader Yasser Arafat had told Palestinian leaders in Tunis they would have to accept a delay of two weeks in implementing the accord.

"If the PLO would indeed when things must end, then that would be an important contribution toward completion of implementation," an Israeli government official said.

Israel Television said the government had wanted to move troops into Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip but the residents refused.

Mr. Ben Ami denied that had been the plan: "There is no way to protect the settlements if not to put the bases next to the settlements... you can't protect yourself only from the inside."

Islamic Jihad, a group opposed to the peace deal, took its fight to the heart of Israel Sunday, attacking a commuter bus near Tel Aviv. The man who carried out the attack and an Israeli were killed.

Israeli government ministers called for security forces to act more forcefully against Jewish settlers who broke the law.

They were reacting to Jewish settlers who opened fire with submachine guns in the West Bank city of Hebron on Friday and Saturday, killing one Palestinian and wounding at least five.

Since the peace accord, which provides Palestinian autonomy in stages, was made public in September, 33 Palestinians and 16 Israelis have been killed.

The latest violence coincided with a peace mission by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who arrived in Israel on Friday night and travelled to Damascus on Sunday. He went to meet Mr. Arafat in Amman on Monday before returning to Israel.

Mr. Christopher called for an end to violence before he left for Syria. He has cautioned against high expectations from his trip.

Rabin-settler showdown looms on self-rule

By Colleen Siegel
Reuter

HEBRON — Yitzhak Rabin blinked in a showdown with ultra-nationalist Jews almost 20 years ago. He allowed them to establish a settlement that paved the way for dozens more in the occupied West Bank.

It is now rematch time and the settlers are reaching for their guns.

Mr. Rabin, a political tyro when he first became prime minister in 1974, says this time around he will not allow settlers to take the law into their hands and wreck Israel's peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Settler leaders say they will stop Palestinian autonomy — due to go into effect on Dec. 13 in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho — before it spreads further.

But the army has yet to display firmness against fellow Israelis. On Dec. 3 soldiers stood by — some even scampered out of the way — when settlers shot up the heart of Hebron in broad daylight after a settler leader's car was stoned.

The most militant of the 120,000 settlers promise bloodshed in their fight to Hold Lands they believe God gave the Jews. Others vow militant resistance, including defiance of Palestinian policemen who will patrol Gaza and Jericho.

Noam Federman, a leader of the right-wing Kach movement who faces charges of threatening Arabs, said recently as he sipped coffee at his home in Hebron: "There will be a lot of bloodshed on both sides... this will be Lebanon."

Since the Israel-PLO peace accord, 32 Arabs and 15 Israelis have been killed. The toll includes two Arabs killed by settlers. It does not show the wounded and the damage caused in settler vigilante raids.

Another Kach leader, Baruch Marzel, said: "I think that today we have to think of more aggressive ways to fight this evil government — I won't go into details about the ways."

On Nov. 26 police revealed that a right-wing rabbi had been arrested trying to smuggle bomb-making material and manuals into Israel from the United States. Kach said the man acted on his own. Police sources say he acted for the anti-Arab group.

Israel seized the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Middle East war. At first, "illegal" settlement — in areas not deemed "strategically" vital — was carried out by a few Jews in Hebron.

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But in 1974, 20 families occupied a West Bank hilltop which they dubbed Elon Moreh. After an eight-month standoff Mr. Rabin, fearful of bloodshed between Jews, allowed them to settle in a nearby army base. The settlers had their breakthrough.

Mr. Rabin has often vowed a "merciless" fight against rejectionist Arabs who kill Israelis. The most he had to say about the settlers was that they did not "move" him.

That changed in November when a rise in settler vigilante raids — thought to be led by Kach — prompted some Arab backers of the peace deal to reconsider. Mr. Rabin ordered security forces to enforce the law "aggressively" against settlers.

Kach's strategy is twofold: To put Palestinians in fear of settlers and to provoke them to go against the accord.

"Today the only thing that protects the Arabs is the Israeli army," said Mr. Marzel.

Settler moderates also promise Mr. Rabin a lot of trouble.

Yesha, the settler group made up of mayors of the communities housing the settlers living among nearly two million Palestinians, says it does not back attacking "innocent" Arabs.

But Yesha does not regard Palestinian policemen as innocents. It has called on its members to refuse to obey the Arab law officers who will replace withdrawing Israeli troops.

Mr. Marzel, who calls Kach Yesha's "commando" force, said: "If a terrorist comes to me with a gun, even if he has the tag of a Palestinian police, I'll kill him. I'll kill him for sure."

Yesha dissociates itself from Kach, saying the penchant for violence obscures what simple civil disobedience can do.

"Think if there was a Palestinian policeman there," said Yesha activist Aaron Domb as he drove past a West Bank junction. "Would I stop? no. Those ten other cars on the other side of the road — they wouldn't either. So what good is the agreement?"

Other Yesha tactics: Refusal to allow troops to redeploy inside its settlements an armed force to patrol its communities under self-rule and 130 "shadow settlements" — one tent or caravan — opposite existing settlements.

Settler sources escalate Yesha protests could calate from blocking Arab traffic, something it has done several times already, to tearing up roads with tractors.

Although some settlers moved to the territories for cheap housing, many others are true rebels with a cause.

"The story has not yet ended, don't you worry, it has only barely begun," Mr. Domb said.

A Palestinian peasant ploughs his field next to the Israeli settlement of Efrat in the occupied West Bank. Jewish settlers are the main Israeli opponents to the Sept. 13 Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accord (AFP photo)

Reagan 'set the stage' for Iran-contra scandal

WASHINGTON (AP) The Iran-contra prosecutor's final report concludes that Ronald Reagan "set the stage" for the scandal's illegal activities and George Bush failed to tell the truth about his role, according to sources familiar with the document.

Lawyers for Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush have read the report by Iran-contra prosecutor Lawrence Walsh and were quick to dispute its conclusions. Mr. Reagan's lawyer called them "utterly irresponsible" while Mr. Bush's attorney called on Mr. Walsh to "fold up his tent."

The soon-to-be-released report says Mr. Reagan created an atmosphere in which top aides felt free to manoeuvre outside the law, accordance to the notes of several individuals who read portions of the document.

In particular, the report states that comments Mr. Reagan made to a top adviser left White House aide Oliver North feeling as though he had an "invitation to break the law," according to the sources' notes.

There is "no credible evidence that President Reagan violated any criminal statute. Nevertheless, he set the state for the illegal activities which ensured," the sources' notes quote the report as saying.

Theodore Olson, Mr. Reagan's lawyer, said he was forbidden by court order from commenting on the report but Mr. Walsh's conclusions "would be completely unwarranted and utterly irresonsible."

"All the evidence... shows that President Reagan complied with all laws and at all times directed his subordinates to do likewise," Mr. Olson said in a statement.

The scandal involved the sale of arms to Iran in exchange for the release of hostages and the diversion of some of the profits from those sales to a clandestine network run by Lieutenant-Colonel North to funnel military supplies to contra rebels in Nicaragua. At the time, Congress had forbidden U.S. military aid to the rebels, who were fighting the leftist government of Nicaragua.

Mr. Walsh's report was completed in August but has been sealed from public scrutiny by a special panel of federal appeals judges to give those named in it time to submit responses.

That three-judge panel announced Friday it would release the report soon, possibly with minor deletions.

For now, the report is only available to those named in it, and their lawyers. Those who read it are prohibited by the court from discussing its contents publicly.

A number of sources provided the Associated Press with a description of its contents, including notes from sections of the report. The sources insisted on anonymity.

The source said the report concludes Mr. Bush was not telling the truth when he declared publicly that he was "out of the loop" — unaware of important aspects of Iran-contra when he served as Mr. Reagan's vice-president.

Mr. Bush has said that he did not know until after the scandal erupted late in 1986 that the arms sales were linked to the release of American hostages held in Lebanon.

"Contrary to public pronouncements, Bush was fully aware of the Iran initiative," the sources' notes quote the report as saying.

The sources said the report also states there are seven unanswered questions about Mr. Bush's knowledge of the scandal that Mr. Walsh intended to raise by questioning Mr. Bush at the trial this year of former Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger.

That trial, however, was scuttled last Christmas eve when Mr. Bush pardoned Mr. Weinberger and five other Iran-contra figures.

In an interview, Mr. Bush's lawyer, Griffin Bell, said that Mr. Bush did not mislead the American public about his role in Iran-contra.

"Judge Walsh has seven unanswered questions, but he had seven years to look into them," Mr. Bell, a former attorney general in the Carter administration, said Friday.

"I think Judge Walsh is a nice man and he ought to just fold his tent, which is what he's doing with this report," Mr. Bell said.

Told of the comments by Mr. Reagan's and Mr. Bush's lawyers, Mr. Walsh said he would decline commenting until after his report is issued.

The AP reported in October that the Walsh report, according to sources' notes, also concluded Mr. Reagan's top aides engaged in a cover-up to protect the president from possible impeachment.

Among those it blamed was Edwin Meese, alleging the former attorney general concocted a "false account" of an Iranian arms-for-hostages deal to cover up Mr. Reagan's role, the sources said.

The sources said the report also concludes Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official Robert Gates — contrary to his sworn testimony — had to have known Col. North was operating a contra resupply operation. At the time, Mr. Gates was deputy CIA director. He later became agency director under Mr. Bush.

Mr. Gates rejected Mr. Walsh's conclusion Saturday, saying that "neither in the independent counsel's investigation nor in any other investigation did anyone testify that I had knowledge of North's operational activities. No one did so testify because no one could."

Mr. Gates said the "selective leaking of the independent counsel's report without the context of the full report and without my response submitted to the court... is fundamentally unfair."

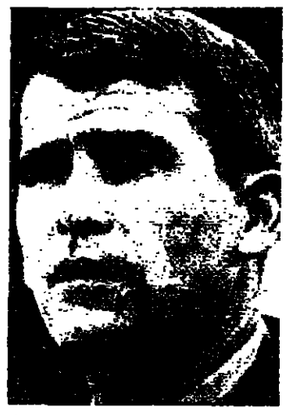
The sources' notes quote Mr. Walsh's report as saying, "the evidence established that Gates was exposed to information about North's connection to the private resupply operation that would have raised concerns in the minds of most reasonable persons."

When Iran-contra prosecutors questioned Mr. Gates, he acknowledged knowing that Col. North had contact with the contras but "did not consider the legality or nature of what Col. North was doing," the sources' notes quote the report as saying.

The sources said the report stated Mr. Walsh's prosecutors gathered evidence for a possible criminal case against Mr. Gates in 1991 but abandoned the effort because they did not believe they had enough proof.

Ronald Reagan

George Bush



Oliver North

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDER

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 ..... Le Monde Sous Marin
18:30 ..... Beaumanoir
19:00 ..... News in French
19:15 ..... Varieties
19:30 ..... News in Hebrew
20:00 ..... News in Arabic
20:30 ..... "Night Court"
21:10 ..... Brand New Life
22:00 ..... News in English
22:20 Biography: Vivien Leigh — Scarlet and Beyond

PRAYER TIMES

04:55 ..... Fajr
06:17 ..... *(Sunrise) Duha*
11:27 ..... Dhuhr
14:13 ..... 'Asr
16:36 ..... Maghreb
17:58 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757

Terrasanta Church Tel: 622366

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church Tel. 652526.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be partly cloudy to cloudy with clouds building up; rain will fall in different areas as temperature will drop; and winds will be southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy with northerly moderate winds becoming southerly moderate in the afternoon, and calm seas becoming rough during the day.

	Min./Max. temp.
Amman	8 / 15
Aqaba	11 / 21
Deserts	5 / 18
Jordan Valley	11 / 20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 19, Aqaba 23, Humidity readings: Amman 32 per cent, Aqaba 42 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Ratib Zaitoun	888685
Dr. Nidal Al Dableh	827195
Dr. Bassam Karadsch	759200
Dr. Yahya Abdul Salam	736072
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	637055
Nairouky pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Nairouky pharmacy	623672
Najib pharmacy	847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Sharairi	248056
Alquds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Ahmad Al Tarifi	900806
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	891228
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amm	644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amm	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	686100
Amal Hospital	674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:10 .... Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:35 ..... Damascus (RJ)
07:45 ..... Dhahran (RJ)
09:10 ..... Muscat, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:25 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
09:50 ..... Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:20 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:35 ..... London (RJ)
16:50 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
16:55 ..... Cairo (RJ)
17:30 ..... Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:20 ..... Vienna (OS)
16:45 ..... Rome (AZ)
18:05 ..... Paris, Beirut (AF)
20:00 ..... Adeo (IY)
00:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
08:30 .... Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:00 ..... Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:15 ..... Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:35 ..... Paris, Brussels (RJ)
11:45 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:05 ..... London (RJ)
12:45 ..... Cairo (RJ)
20:00 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
20:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
21:30 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:00 ..... Colombo, Singapore (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

1:50 ..... Vienna (OS)
17:45 ..... Dubai (AZ)
21:00 ..... Aden (IY)
01:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman	8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus	5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus	7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman	5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	720/500
Banana	600
Banana (Mukammar)	620
Beans	600 / 300
Cabbage	120 / 70
Carrot	250/180
Cauliflower	210/ 150
Clementine	190 / 100
Cucumbers (large)	200 / 150
Cucumbers (small)	300 / 220
Eggplant	220 / 100
Garlic	900 / 700
Grapes	800/600
Grape Fruit	180/100
Lemon	170 / 100
Marrow (large)	240 / 140
Marrow (small)	420 / 320
Molukhia	600 / 400
Olives (green)	600/400
Orange	300/ 200
Onion (dry)	400 / 300
Onion (green)	220 / 150
Pepper (hot)	260 / 200
Pepper (sweet)	260 / 200
Potato	270/ 200
Radish	180/ 100
Tomato	450/ 250
Spinach	240 / 180

PRESERVING HISTORY: Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Monday opens Al Hashemieh Hall at Al Qadesieh School in Irbid. The hall was built by the Ministry of Education and the Jordanian Armed Forces. The Princess inspected the hall and its collection of documents and photos which relate the story of the Great Arab Revolt and the role of the Hashemites (Petra photo)

U.N. eradicates animal disease from Arab region

AMMAN (J.T.) — Rinderpest, the dreaded cow plague, has been eradicated from the Arab region, according to Agriculture Minister Mohammad Mahdi Farhan.

In inaugurating a meeting Monday of the regional project on "West Asia Rinderpest Eradicating Campaign Coordination" (WARECC), Dr. Farhan said he was pleased with vaccines of the project which was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Citing Jordan's own record of achievement, the minister said that since 1973 there has been no outbreak of Rinderpest within Jordan's borders, despite the continuing presence of the disease in neighbouring countries and Jordan's position as a vital transit route for livestock trade from Turkey and Syria to Saudi Arabia.

"Our success has now been enhanced by that of the U.N. Arab scientists in accomplishing their task of eradicating the Rinderpest cow plague from the Arab region, and I commend them heartly for their intensive efforts and cooperative spirit," said Dr. Farhan.

He said that the importance of maintaining the disease-free status of the West Asian area is evident from an understanding of the agricultural communities it comprises.

According to the minister, Jordan's small cow population numbers 64,000 for dairy and meat. The Kingdom has a sizeable population of sheep, numbering 2.6 million and owned by about 24,000 shepherds — 77% of whom hold less than 100 sheep. The goat population is around one million, owned by 30,000 farmers — 87% of whom hold fewer than 100 goats. In addition, the country claims about 32,000 camels and 56,000 horses, mules and donkeys.

"Whereas cow rearing is mostly undertaken as a part of intensive dairy production, by rich farmers and organised cooperatives, sheep and goats are the main source of livelihood for bedouin and itinerant shepherds living in tents on the rangelands, and moving their families along with their flocks from one grazing area to another, Dr. Farhan explained.

He said that while the men of these families are concerned mostly in marketing their livestock produce, the burden of actually rearing and grazing the sheep and goats falls to the women.

Thus, he said animal rearing is directly related to the welfare of the rural poor and women in particular.

"Breeding and production improvements, however, cannot succeed in both a quantitative and a qualitative increase without corresponding improvements in veterinary services and effective programmes for controllling diseases and pests," Dr. Farhan maintained.

He explained that although Jordan has had no threat of Rinderpest in cows for over 20 years, it has recently been confronted by a similar disease in sheep called "Peste des Petits Ruminants" (PPR).

He expressed gratitude to the UNDP and FAO for starting a project to control this disease in Jordan and for assisting with the supply of vaccines, chemicals, equipment and glassware.

Addressing the opening session, Osman Hashim, UNDP resident representative in Amman, talked about UNDP and FAO assistance to Jordan in agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry, in the form of ongoing projects on horticulture, forestry and range management, livestock statistics and animal disease control.

Mr. Hashim said that apart from UNDP assistance of $2 million for the Rinderpest Control Project, another project has been launched tor controlling PPR in Jordan, at a cost of $183,000.

Y. Cheneau, chief of Animal Health Service at FAO headquarters in Rome, told the meeting about FAO's global Rinderpest Eradication Programme and two other campaigns in Africa and South Asia. Dr. Cheneau also informed participants about FAO's assistance to Arab countries in Livestock Disease Control Programmes.

Dr. M.F. Kilani, director of the Veterinary Department, highlighted the activities of the department and Jordan's efforts in maintaining Rinderpest eradication status since 1973.

The two-day regional meeting, being attended by delegates from Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon, will mainly discuss the ways and means of sustaining the Rinderpest eradication status in the region and consolidating the gains made under the WARECC.

Lower House members continue vote of confidence discussion

AMMAN (J.T.) — Lower House of Parliament deputies Monday continued their debate over a vote of confidence for the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali. Excerpts from the statements of 22 deputies who spoke in Monday's session follow.

Abed Mousa Al Nahar
(Amman Fifth District)
(Progressive Democratic Coalition - PDC)

I believe that the government has no right in considering the Speech from the Throne as its policy statement for the following reasons:

1. The Speech, thought it contains broadlines for the state's policy, focuses mostly on the past and little on the future and lacks details because it is a statement of directives to the government.

2 I demand that the question of whether to regard the Speech a government policy statement or not be referred to the Higher Council for the Interpretation of the Jordanian Constitution. I believe that the continuation of a government in office after it had dissolved the previous Parliament and conducted parliamentary elections runs contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and parliamentary norms followed so far in the Kingdom.

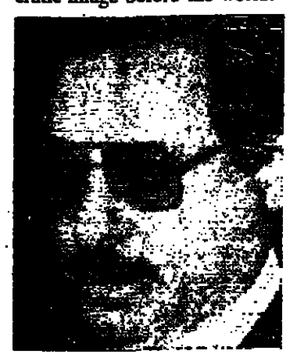
3 Was it not wiser for the prime minister to have approached the House with a clearly-defined policy statement for which he would request a vote of confidence?

4 A majority of Parliament members have requested the prime minister to form a Cabinet that would be composed of members capable of handling the critical stage Jordan is witnessing at the political, economic and administrative level as well as the peace negotiations and other questions of destiny. They demanded that the government consult with the parliamentary blocs and with deputies in line with the principle of cooperation between the legislative and executive authority.

The prime minister failed to take any of these steps, ignored the deputies' proposals, went on with his reshuffle plans and contented himself with the Speech from the Throne as a government statement.

I believe that this is a bad start for the government and a negative indicator of the nature of the relationship between the two authorities. This is because the government's moves gave us a general impression that it would be taking unilateral decisions without consulting with the House members about general affairs including questions of destiny.

This of course would adversely affect public confidence in the House and in the parliamentary and democratic life in Jordan, a situation that would shake Jordan's democratic image before the world.



Mohammad Addoub Al Zaben
(Central Bedouins)
(Independent-I)

We support the government's efforts aimed at achieving cooperation and coordination among the Arab countries... I would like to point to the laudable efforts of the government in their attempt to upgrade the level of our diplomatic missions abroad... and that our embassies will become a place of assistance to Jordanian citizens as well as to our students.

I appreciate the government's policy that is aimed at achieving decentralisation and that goes hand in hand with the comprehensive democratic drive in the country.

More than 843 industrial ventures have been registered that provide 11,200 jobs as well as another 4,017 companies... where are these companies and factories situated, and has the geographical distribution been taken into consideration? Did they carry out feasibility studies for these companies before licensing them?

When I judge the government's policy statement I will form my opinion regardless of its members so as to have a sound and precise decision.

Taha Hal'ahden
(Ma'an District)
(National Action Front - NAF)

We demand the government give us an explanation concerning certain issues raised in the Speech from the Throne.

On page 15... during the past years we have been hearing about administrative reform, nevertheless, the administration is worsening.

If we look at page 18 there is some talk about a cultural, artistic and intellectual movement... does the government have a national plan to protect the Jordanian author and writer and to provide them with social security?

On page 19, on the information strategy, I am not aware of any strategy that the government is talking about. On page 29 there is a mention of agriculture and development funds; where are the plans to protect our animal wealth? What about the meat that we import at very high costs that many poor people cannot afford?

As to water problems, on page 23, they are not limited to extending the water networks, it is of paramount importance to preserve water resources... studies show that there is a large drainage of water basins especially to Shobak where recession reached 75 metres in the Shobak Reservoir.

We will continue to extend help and assistance to this government as long as it is committed to justice and equality. But, if it deviated from this path, we will adopt other measures.

Khaled Ajarmeh
(Amman Fifth District) (NAF)

I think that we should give our brother ministers a chance... and if they were not up to the expectations, they will not be far from judgement and questioning... the dialogue will continue and for the best of this country.

As to the prime minister himself... I know him to be a wise man, an intellect and has left his imprints on this good country... he was the one to shoulder the responsibility of the Arab-Israeli negotiations... he has negotiating ability that nobody else possesses.

The government's ministerial statement is comprehensive in all this country needs, it meets all the requirements and there is no flaw in it. It will be the landmark of fruitful and good work... to our wise government, all the confidence.

Salem Zawaideh
(Southern Bedouins) (I)

As to the vote of confidence, it will depend upon the government's response to my demands concerning the Southern Bedouin District.

I demand the government reconsider army pension regulations as well as the high increase in prices.

I would like to present the demands of the southern badia people in front of the government. First, concerning education, I want to point to the high cost of university fees and the absence of a university in Ma'an, which are main reasons in the rise of unemployment and the low level of educational standards.

I call on the government to bring electricity to Wadi Araba villages... I also demand the government pay particular attention to women in the southern badia by opening training centres and giving them the priority to obtain jobs in the government's various institutions.

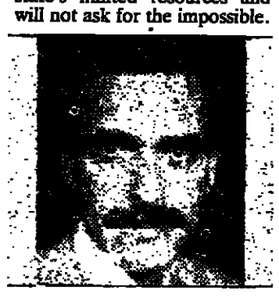
Mohammad Huneiti
(Amman Fourth District)
(PDC)

Jordan is passing through dangerous circumstances that require wisdom and realism. My district has several issues that I put in front of your dignified House. They include: poverty and unemployment, lack of health care, lack of educational facilities, problems related to Amman's Ring Road, and problems related to land ownership.

Poverty has reached alarming levels that, if unaddressed, might lead to social catastrophe. My district lacks a hospital and a waste water sewage system.

Schools in my area still accommodate children in the morning and afternoon. The Ring Road requires upgrading, and land ownership must be resolved.

I am fully aware of the state's limited resources and will not ask for the impossible.



Abdul Hafez Shakhanbeh
(Amman Sixth District)
(PDC)

I have to wait for the government's replies to the deputies' speeches before deciding on whether to give the government a vote of confidence.

In my view, poverty is the main chronic problem facing the Kingdom. We are living a major tragedy watching large portions of our society suffer from poverty and need, despite the millions spent on development over the past decades.

Indeed I view poverty in Jordan as a time bomb that could go off at any moment, and if it does it would devastate everything. It is not enough to say that Jordanians are equal in responsibilities and rights; the government ought to deal with this chronic and worsening problem as soon as possible.

Jordan is basically an agricultural country, but the successive governments gave insufficient care to the agricultural sector. I demand that the government give due attention to agriculture and improve it in quantity and quality.

As to the government's decentralisation policy, I demand that the government take its time and refrain from rushing things, as I believe those who are to take over from the central government in handling the affairs of the governorates are not yet sufficiently capable to shoulder this serious responsibility.

Nader Thuheirat
(Koura and Jordan Valley)
(I)

The Speech from the Throne serves as a government statement and should be regarded as a source of pride and honour for every government and every Parliament.

But I plan to vote in the light of the prime minister's statement, replying to the deputies speeches.

However, I would like to note here that I share the view of many of the independent deputies who believe that the prime minister, whom we deeply respect and appreciate, should have consulted them over the formation of the government and its policies.

I do note here that the press, in which we take pride, has published reports that were considered inappropriate because they offended House members.

Whether or not the government should be supported with a vote of confidence... largely depends on its programmes and its policy in handling the various chronic issues facing Jordan.

I believe that the agricultural sector still faces worsening problems and though I have repeatedly demanded from the successive governments solutions and assistance for the tens of thousands of farmers, we only received unfulfilled promises.

I demand that the government write off the interest that accrued on farmers' debts because the farmers continually faced losses because of unforseen circumstances.

I also demand that the government support agricultural exports and try to find markets for Jordanian agricultural products in foreign countries and reduce the rate of air freight charged on shipment.

I believe that the time has come for the government to re-examine a great number of situations where civil servants' performance has been harmful to the administration and the public.

With regard to the Jordan Valley, it has been noticed that Jordan Valley Authority's management of irrigation projects has been deteriorating, which means an increase in the operational costs and wastage of precious water resources. This is attributable to the absence of allocations for the purchase of machinery, vehicles and other equipment, absence of incentives for workers and officials distributing water to the farms, and the absence of field supervision.

I demand that the government provide the House with full information concerning the Karameh Dam and the views of those who oppose its construction as well as those in favour. The House would like to learn also more about the other dams planned for other areas of Jordan.

I request that the municipal councils in various towns be assisted so that they can carry out services and plans. Many of these municipalities lie under a heavy burden of debt.

Hamzeh Mansour
(Amman Second District)
(Islamic Action Front - IAF)

The government claimed that it managed the elections skilfully and democratically, but I would like to ask...

1 Was allowing the public to live in anxiety for a period of time wondering if the elections would be held on schedule, democratic?

2 Can one call issuance of voting cards efficient work when people had to tour several centres to get them?

3 Was the government democratic in issuing whole sets of voting cards to certain candidates?

4 Is it a practice of democracy and justice to transfer teachers from their original districts to prevent them from participating in election campaigns?

5 Was it democratic on the part of the government to ban rallies?

6 Was it democratic on the part of the government to exercise pressure on the public to influence their choice of candidates?

7 Was it democratic to impose a siege on the party offices to prevent them from meeting the press?

8 Was it democratic to cut telephone lines of certain candidates on election day?

9 Was it democratic to bar candidates from watching the vote counting process?

In instituting the one-person, one-vote election system, the government claimed that it was basing its decision on the Constitution and the National Charter. But this is a way of cheating the public.

The government breached the Constitution by terminating the mandate of the previous Parliament, ignored the demands of the deputies of the 11th Parliament who called for an extraordinary session to finalise discussion of laws, and issued a contemporary Election Law which we consider undemocratic and anti-constitutional.

The Election Law was harmful to the nation and consecrated all forms of sectarianism, ethnic affiliations and regionalism, and devastated all that has been built over the ages by the reformists, teachers and all faithful people.

Indeed, the government's claims about freedom, respect for the Constitution, political pluralism, etc., contradict its actions and practices.

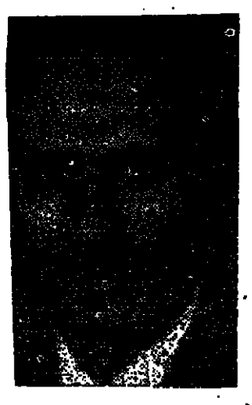
The government's claims about upholding freedoms conflict with its actions, which among other things include confiscating passports and depriving party members from promotion if they are government employees.

National unity can be safeguarded through equal opportunities for all citizens in being accepted at the universities and in obtaining jobs through the Civil Service Commission and also through equal services to various districts.

On the political level, all those agreements that have been concluded on the Jordanian and the Palestinian tracks represent a defeat far worse than the defeats of the 1948 and 1967 wars.

The conclusion of the Jordanian-Israeli agenda in September opened the door wide for the Jews to achieve their objectives in the Arab region.

I will withhold confidence in the government until it applies Sharia rule, achieves justice and equality, protects the people's dignity, enhances national unity and deals with the Palestine question in accordance with the teachings of the Koran.



Rateb Al Saoud
(Tafileh District) (NAF)

We deputies are invited to monitor ourselves before we monitor the government... I don't think that the prime minister, to whom I bear my utmost respect, has been fortunate in his choice of some of the ministers in terms of experience and specialisation.

Our institutions are in need of creative leaders and not bureaucratic administrators... we had hoped that the government would give preference to the people instead of itself in increasing the salaries of the ministerial team, the senators and the deputies.

If Jordan wants to take the first step towards the Arab-Gulf reconciliation, it should not, especially in its reconciliation with Saudi Arabia, be at the expense of the continuity of the embargo on the Iraqi people.

We will not spare any effort to disclose wrong practices or behaviour of any minister, whoever it is... we are in the same boat and survival is not interest to us all.

Hani Hijazin
(Karak District) (NAF)

Jordan was established on solid foundations of cooperation and solidarity... and the 12th parliamentary elections were carried out in an atmosphere of equality, integrity and justice... our present Parliament is representative of all political and party trends.

To consider the Speech from the Throne as the government's policy statement is, undisputably, constitutional... and whoever reads it thoroughly sees that it is comprehensive and reflective of the people's aspirations and hopes.

We call on the government to pay more attention to our Armed Froces and security apparatus... we demand that the government implement its policy statement and we do not mind if there are some opponents as long as opposition is in the service of our homeland.

Ahmad Al Qudah
(Ajloun District) (Ahd)

Jordan has achieved major strides in the march of democracy, but this should be corroborated through development in the political, economic, scientific and cultural domains and also in modernising legislation that guarantees continued growth.

I demand that the government give due attention to the question of unemployment which has not been tackled meaningfully by the previous governments.

I demand that the government work towards attracting capital for income-generating industrial projects and that it works towards finding new markets for Jordanian proudcts abroad.

I believe that all citizens have the right to health care services which the government ought to provide, and (the government should) give due care to protecting the environment.

I request that the government conduct a comprehensive revision of the educational system and give appropriate consideration to sciences and vocational training.

I support moves to improve the living conditions of government employees, enhance the capabilities of the Armed Forces and security services, and upgrade the status of Jordanian women.

I call on the government to pursue efforts for the achievement of durable peace along all tracks, and I request that the government inform the deputies of progress along the Jordanian track.

(Continued on page 5)

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ☆ UNRWA exhibition of Palestinian embroidery and greeting cards at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation (10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.)
- ☆ Art exhibition by artist Edelbert Della at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ☆ Art exhibition by artist Beotr Bewluczuk at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ☆ Exhibition of prints and drawings by Fakhr El Nissa Zeid at Darat Al Funun of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luweibdeh. Also showing the permanent exhibition (Saturday-Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.)
- ☆ Plastic art exhibition by a number of Iraqi artists at La Casa Art Gallery (between the 5th and 6th Circles).
- ☆ Exhibition of sewing equipment at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ☆ Exhibition of Lebanese products at Philadelphia Hotel.
- ☆ Second Jordanian exhibition of cotton and woollen products at the World Exhibition Hall — University Road (11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.)
- ☆ Exhibition of paintings by artist Khalid Khreis at the French Cultural Centre.
- ☆ Exhibition of watercolours by artist Shaher Jirmi at the Goethe Institute.
- ☆ Photographic exhibition on the intifada at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation (8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.)
- ☆ Art exhibition by artist Farghali Abdel Hafiez at the Balka' Art Gallery in Al Fuheis (10:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m.) (Tel. 720902).
- ☆ Plastic art exhibition by several Jordanian and Iraqi artists at the Orfali Art Gallery in Um Uthaina.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Rounds for Democracy

ROUND ONE and two in the Lower House's vote of confidence debate yesterday and the day before have produced an array of opinions dominated by concerns about the peace process, domestic reforms and Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali's performance since he assumed office several months ago. Yet the issue of the democratisation process in the country, which has been affected not so much by the exclusion of members of the Lower House from the Cabinet but rather by the absence of an effective consultation process between the two branches of government, remains to be the focal point for the people and their representatives.

As a result of this, the democratic spirit that the country has been trying to cultivate and strengthen was somewhat dampened since it also came on the heels of a series of other steps that have not been seen as democratic. The dissolution of the 11th parliament rather prematurely has been largely accepted as a necessary evil due to the imperfection of the 1989 general elections. However, when coupled with other controversial measures and decisions such as the one-person-one-vote criterion or the imperfect way the November 8 parliamentary elections were conducted, a climate of scepticism about the fate of democracy was created even though this might have never been intended.

These events have naturally led some members of the lower chamber to heavily criticise the government for what they saw as an "orchestrated campaign" by it to further its political fortunes and objectives. While all accusations by the honourable members are not necessarily fair or accurate, we nevertheless feel that the prime minister could have done more to avoid bypassing of parliamentarians, in the context of seeking their advice and consent that usually characterise democratic regimes worldwide or forming or reshuffling governments.

***Given the extent of the controversies that past policy* decisions by the Majali government have created in the country, one would have thought that the prime minister would make a more determined effort to soothe the feelings of many parliamentarians and woo them on the side of his newly formed Cabinet by involving them in the real consultation process leading to major national decisions. There are other ways to establish positive and constructive bridges with the legislature than to assign Cabinet portfolios to some of them. This has not been done and in the process left the government, exposed to attack at a time when the country is passing through a critical stage in its political life.**

We do not think it is too late to rectify the situation even though there is no imminent danger that Dr. Majali may lose the vote of confidence. The way the law on this point reads makes it extremely far fetched to assemble 41 Lower House members to cast a negative vote against the government. But this is not the main concern. Even though the government will eventually win its battle, the victory could prove to be shallow unless urgent measures are introduced to address the legitimate anxieties of the people's representatives. The national issues that lie ahead call for the strongest possible government and one that enjoys the widest possible grassroots support. This objective can still be attained if a more constructive dialogue and effective line of communication is maintained between the two branches of government.

We do not think that the parliamentarians who criticised the government were all seeking Cabinet posts. Our reading of their complaints suggests that something much more profound was on the minds of many of them. We like to think it is their strong desire to see democracy in full swing in Jordan that prompted them to adopt such position.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily Monday discussed the visits to Jordan by Palestine President Arafat and the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and said that the Middle East peace is the only topic on the agenda of His Majesty King Hussein's discussions with the two guests. The King's talks with Mr. Arafat is in the course of the Jordanian-Palestinian coordination for the sake of confronting the obstacles in the peace process, said the daily. Mr. Christopher is bound to discuss with the King and Jordanian government officials how to give momentum to the peace process which is in need of stimulation at the moment, added the daily. It should be noted, however, that the U.S. secretary will have to handle the obstacles laid in the path of peace by Israel which pursues all forms of repression on the Palestinians and continues to delay the implementation of the PLO-Israeli deal struck on Sept. 13, according to the paper. It said that Israel continues to delay the implementation of the agreement as it aims to perpetuate its presence in Arab land in defiance of all international agreements and U.N. resolutions. The paper said that the U.S. administration ought to show more commitment to the requirements of peace and force the Israelis to comply with the U.N. resolutions and the agreements reached through the peace negotiations. It demanded a neutral U.S. stand in the peace process and a serious effort at this stage to put an end to Israel's blackmail and procrastinations. The paper said that the Arabs are oriented towards the attainment of a just and durable settlement.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i daily discussed measures taken by the health ministry to curb the habit of smoking and to protect non-smokers from the dangers of smoke. It seems that the health ministry has finally decided to put into force a 1977 law banning smoking in public places and it is hoped that the measures to be adopted would yield good results, said Nazih. The writer said that the ministry seems now certain that it can overcome the obstacles that to date has prevented the law from being enforced and therefore a campaign is to be launched soon. It should be noted that the enforcement of the law is designed to provide protection to the non-smokers and to keep the environment clean and safe; and for this reason, a campaign for spreading awareness against smoking is not enough but it must rather be followed by practical steps in imposing fines on the violators of the law, demanded the writer. He said that the previous campaigns giving advice to smokers to abstain from smoking especially in public places have failed to yield any results.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khouri

The exhilarating political biology of Palestine

BIRTH is never an easy or painless process. The birth of Palestine that we witness these days in proving to be violent and agonizing, which means it is likely to produce a healthy being that has a good chance of long-term survival and development.

The upsurge in violence in Israeli-occupied Palestine during the last ten days, the slow progress in the bilateral Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, the Palestinian opposition to the peace process, the internal political challenge to Yasser Arafat's solo style of governance, and the American secretary of state's visit to the region are all political birth pangs — signs that the state of Palestine is almost ready to come into this world.

Yet, there are no guarantees that it will do so, for in the world of nation-states as in the world of biological organisms there are cruel phenomena such as spontaneous abortion, stillbirth, and perinatal death (death in the months immediately before or after birth). The natural tendency for human beings (especially we Semites) to swing on an emotional pendulum according to the news of the moment is very much in evidence these days. The initial approval of the Sept. 13 declaration of principles by around 65-70 per cent of Palestinians and Israelis is receding to around 50 per cent, according to the latest polls, as frustration and doubt seem to dominate the collective Semitic psyche.

Yet, I am convinced that the seemingly negative political manifestations we witness all around us are not the death knell of the peace accord, but rather its pre-delivery labour pains.

The violence in the streets of Palestine is the most dramatic aspect of this phenomenon, but it is probably the least important in terms of whether the peace process will succeed or not. The Israeli army, the Zionist settler-colonialists, and the anti-accord militant Palestinian groups are all symbols of the past, rather than harbingers of the future.

Many Israelis would like to try to maintain their hold on much of Palestine and to give the Palestinians a very limited form of permanent self-rule under overall Israeli aegis. They know, however, that this is unacceptable. They know that the Palestinians must be granted credible self-governing authority in this transitional phase before they assume full sovereignty over their land and lives.

The process of coming to terms with this Palestinian national reality, especially for the Zionist settler-colonialist crazies in the occupied territories, is very difficult. It signifies a final neutralisation and containment of Zionist ideology and mythology. For Palestinians also, the process of peacemaking is difficult and often humiliating. The process demands that both Israelis and Palestinians make compromises and concessions that they have always labelled as dangerous, if not suicidal and treasonous.

Many people on both sides feel more comfortable in the old modes of emotional rhetoric, militaristic confrontation, and nationalistic romanticism. The violence on the streets of Palestine, as well as the Israeli government's attempts to interpret the Sept. 13 accord in a narrow manner at the peace negotiations in Egypt, are both signs of old warriors and their failed political order trying to make one last dramatic gesture of defiance — a necessary gesture, however, that is also emotionally and politically cleansing. The fighters are engaged in one last fling, a desperate but futile attempt to cling to comfortable old habits based on exaggerated displays of honour, manhood and pride — reflecting the bravado and machismo that emanate easily from the Semitic soul, while rejecting the more demanding challenge of political rationality, compromise and reconciliation.

It is abundantly clear, though, that these gladiatorial ways have achieved nothing beyond perpetual warfare and escalating material and psychological suffering by both sides — who signed the peace accord because they understood the verdict of history and of their people: there is no viable alternative to the partition of Palestine and to share it in the form of sovereign Israeli and Palestinian communities, enjoying parallel and equal rights.

"The long-term chances of achieving a just peace on this basis depend very much on what happens in the short term, i.e. over the next year. The battle for political dominance in Israel and Palestine is now in high gear and whoever wins will determine whether we implement a just peace or spin out of control towards a renewed cycle of violence, denial and death."

The long-term chances of achieving a just peace on this basis depend very much on what happens in the short term, i.e. over the next year. The battle for political dominance in Israel and Palestine is now in high gear and whoever wins will determine whether we implement a just peace or spin out of control towards a renewed cycle of violence, denial death. The battle is between the centrist, moderate Semitic forces represented respectively by the Rabin-Labour and the Arafat-Fateh crowds, and the more extremist fringe represented by the Likud-settlers alliance in Israel and by the Islamists-leftist rejectionists in the Arab World.

The pressure now being exerted by both opposition camps will probably push the negotiators to make faster progress and to show the gains that can be had from justice and peace. The alternative scenario that haunts the region is for the current peace process to fail and for Likud-settlers to rule in Israel and the Hamas-Islamists folks in the Arab World. This remains a real if depressing possibility, though it would only lead to further future tension and bloodshed.

In this context, the most politically significant development in the last month has been the alliance of convenience forged between Palestinian Islamists and leftist rejectionists; this is evident in ad hoc coalitions based in Damascus and it was triumphant in the student council elections at Birzeit University in Palestine. (Interestingly enough, a parallel alliance of convenience along similar grounds seems to be forming in the Jordanian Parliament, to confront the political culture and procedural tendencies of the incumbent government; but that is another tale, for another day).

The anti-accord forces are challenging the peace process from the outside, while powerful and credible Palestinians are challenging Yasser Arafat's one-man band style of leadership from the inside. These are healthy and necessary development that we should welcome. They signify that Palestine may be born as a credible political community that does not suffer the banana republic syndrome of top-heavy autocratic rule that characterises most other Arab countries.

It would have been a problem had the majority of Palestinians blindly applauded the peace accord and allowed Mr. Arafat to claim 99 per cent support as he went about the business of organising yet another little Arab country forged in the furnaces of post-colonial 20th century Arab national fragmentation and miniaturisation — what a former Jordanian foreign minister once referred to eloquently as the "transistorisation" of Arab politics.

The confrontations we witness in the holy land today are complemented by continued international interest in promoting a just and durable peace. That's why the world came up with over $2 billion in aid for the peace process and why Warren Christopher is here again with his travelling peacemaking show.

We have now a constructive and historically attractive combination of forces at work to forge a realistic peace arrangement: regional pressures to make sure that the peace agreement that is negotiated is realistic for all sides, domestic pressures in Palestine to make sure that peace results in a stable, democratic and pluralistic Palestinian political order and international activism to make sure that the peace accord, does not fail for lack of financial or diplomatic support from abroad.

There will be more violence, political hiccups and hesitation on both sides of the peace process as this great drama moves ahead. Those who would have us panic at the first sight of blood, stalemated talks, or burning tires would like us to get lost in the details of the day — when we should maintain our vision firmly fixed on the promise of Palestinian statehood, the rights of the Arab states and Israel, and justice, peace and reconciliation in the larger Semitic family. We should recognise what is really happening in terms of Semitic political biology, as the state of Palestine suffers through its birth pangs these weeks and months and the neighbours all get involved in the messy but exhilarating millenial drama of creation.

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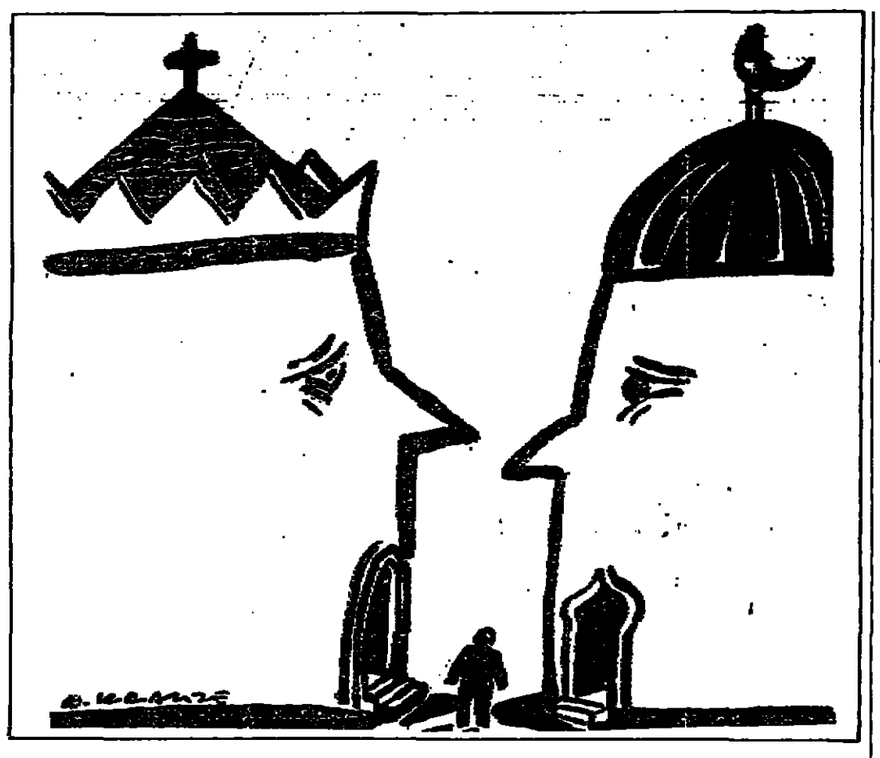
Falling among believers

By Akbar Ahmed

Professor Ahmed is a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge, and a member of the Centre of South Asian Studies. He based his article on a speech delivered by Prince Charles at Oxford at the end of November, in which the British heir had highlighted some of the misconceptions the West has about Islamic teaching and values.



The Prince of Wales has rushed in where angels fear to tread, for to start a discussion on Islam and the West is to enter dangerous territory. The prince is no longer dealing with what many see as eccentric but harmless interests like ecology and architecture. In examining Islam and the West he confronts entrenched prejudice hatred and ignorance, sometimes a thousand years old and on both sides.

What then impelled him in his speech to step into what he himself described as an area covered in "minefields"? Was it the desire to adopt a new cause? Or some deep-rooted impulse to flirt with danger, to go where no royal has been before?

The prince's answers are convincing: they rest in the firm belief that the two — Islam and the West — have "much to learn from each other", that what binds them is more powerful than anything which creates misunderstandings between them. For example, both believe in family values, respect for knowledge and compassion for the poor. Yet their "misunderstanding remains dangerously high."

There is also, of course, the very real physical presence of Islam: a global population of one billion Muslims; one and a half to two million in the U.K. (with 500 mosques); their presence in the Commonwealth is another link with the British, "Islam is all around us", noted the prince correctly, "and yet distrust, even fear, persist."

The relationship between the two in a real and dramatic sense stands at the crossroads. Understanding and dialogue improve the situation.

One way to soothe the West's fears of Islam is to show how much Europe has been influenced by Islam, to illustrate the common. Europeans borrowed academic life, medicine, philosophy and music from Muslim Spain. Islam was the most tolerant of religions, allowing Christians and Jews to live and worship in Muslim lands. Muslim Spain was the zenith of Islamic culture and Cordoba, the capital, a glittering jewel of a city. It boasted 400,000 books in its libraries — more than in the combined libraries of the rest of Europe. But we have heard this argument before. The answer to it is, so what? We need to know about the contemporary relationship between Islam and the West.

What is missed in the discussion here is the genuine anguish and anger in Muslim society at the emerging world order rooted in materialism and consumerism. But all traditional societies are worried about some trends of consumer capitalism — drugs, divorce, alcoholism, AIDS. These are causing concern not only to Muslims but Hindus, Jews and indeed traditional Christians.

By stating his argument in this manner, the prince universalised the problem. It was no longer an issue between Islam and the West, but between one kind of life and another; between old values and new; between modernity and tradition.

The core — and most controversial part — of the prince's message was a call to challenge the "acquisitive" and "exploitative" side of western civilisation. He pointed out the divided and bankrupt inner life of the West. In contrast, Islam remains socially integrated and spiritually whole; its spirituality has much to teach western materialism.

This will be too much for most people in the West. It is fine for a man of humility, learning and introspection, a scholar-prince. But for others, even those who do not see the world through ethnocentric glasses, this will cause outrage. Ideas of racial and cultural superiority still inform the way people think.

The tabloids will be screaming for royal blood, veins dripping with vitriol. "Ayatallah Charlie go home to Tehran" they will shriek. Much of the spiteful and superficial response will reflect the general contempt for Islam.

Others will respond by being personally vicious about Prince Charles himself. They will see his interest in Islam as another royal fad. More unkind hacks will say a man who talks to plants deserves Islam — that Islam and the prince deserve each other. There's something seriously unhealthy in the relationship between the British royal family and the press.

Some Muslims, too, will be unhappy. Adopting a characteristic holier-than-thou attitude, they will say: "Who's Charles to teach us about Islam? Why does he assume we need him to speak on our behalf?"

All this will be a pity, for Prince Charles has a unique platform from which to address matters of universal concern in a serious and informed manner. His involvement alone ensures that the subject will be widely covered. And, above all, he underlines the dignity that is a birth-right of all human beings.

But while agreeing with the direction of the speech, I must point out the classic mistake of depicting an ideal type of Muslim society. To take two examples: Islamic law and Islam's treatment of women are both seen as barbaric and cruel in the West. Prince Charles is right to try to contextualise both, to underline that the western view is incorrect and simplisitc.

However, Prince Charles needs to understand that Islamic law can only be successfully applied in a truly Islamic society. Most modern Muslim societies are riddled with corruption and nepotism. Harsh punishment such as whipping or cutting of hands are invariably reserved for either the poor or less privileged or those opposed to government.

On women, the prince is right that they are not "second-class citizens in Islam, that they were given rights to inherit and to divorce, in the 7th century, that today there are two female prime ministers in Muslim countries (Pakistan and Bangladesh).

The reality is more complex. Women's lives are difficult, and are made more so by the rapid changes now taking place. In the rural and tribal areas of most Muslim countries, few women inherit property or wield any political influence. Their lot at home is usually miserable, often with the threat of other wives being brought into the home. This is not Islamic teaching, it is male chauvinism.

But this is carping. The prince summed up the essence of his message in an Arabic proverb:

What comes from the lips
reaches the ear.
What comes from the heart
reaches the heart.

I believe Prince Charles's message reached the heart. For his courage I admire him; for his predicament I feel for him.

Hungary's socialists start political comeback

By Michael Shields
Reuter

BUDAPEST — Only three years after Hungarians voted reform communists from power, a revamped Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP) is poised to make a political comeback in a general election set for 1994.

Wooing those disillusioned with the political and economic malaise that has accompanied Hungary's painful transition to a market democracy, the socialists have gained ground by pledging to ease social tensions and restore economic order.

"More and more people have to deal every day with serious problems, especially if they have the feeling they have been abandoned," HSP President Gyula Horn told Reuters.

"Nobody cares about them. I'm not just talking about starving pensioners, but also about others, people who still have a job but who could be put out on the street tomorrow."

Mr. Horn, foreign minister in the reform Communist government ousted in 1990, is counting on the HSP's message of social sensitivity and pragmatic economic policy to make Hungary the next Eastern European country — after Lithuania and Poland — to reembrace politicians with roots in the communist past.

But he sneers at suggestions that a socialist-led government would mark Hungary's return to communism after a disappointing experiment with free-market democracy.

"I cannot accept any criticism that tries to suggest the communists are coming back," he said. "Why should we return to the regime that we did the most to topple... why would we want to bring back the communism whose grave we dug?"

Mr. Horn and other reformers helped bring down the one-party state in the late 1980s by easing out party leader Janos Kadar, legalising opposition parties and negotiating free elections which they contested as the newly social democratic HSP.

They won only 33 seats in the 386-parliament dominated by Prime Minister Jozsef Antall's Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF) and two allied conservative parties, but Mr. Horn said the HSP would certainly do better in the next election.

Opinion polls less than a year before the next election show the HSP is second only to Fidesz, the radical youth movement turned political party, in the eyes of voters. It is popular among the most highly educated Hungarians as well as blue-collar workers.

Between a fifth and quarter of those surveyed and who express a preference rank the HSP their favourite, far above the single-digit ratings for the HDF.

With Mr. Fidesz locked in an identity crisis spurred by its leaders' flirtation with conservatism, the socialists may well win the most seats in Hungary's next parliament, Mr. Horn said.

But with more than a third of Hungarians still undecided or unwilling to vote at all, it remains far from certain that the socialists will be running the country this time next year.

The HSP may have trouble finding coalition partners if it fails to win a parliamentary majority because such an alliance is anathema to conservatives and of questionable long-term value to Hungary's liberal opposition, said political scientist Laszlo Bruszt.

"If the socialists are strong and the HDF is very weak, that is the most probable case in which the socialists could get into the government," he added

Mr. Bruszt said much depends on the image socialists project — the paternalist party Mr. Horn symbolises, or the liberal technocrats embodied by former Finance Minister Laszlo Bekesi.

If given the chance to govern, the HSP will put a kinder, gentler face on Hungary's transformation but still insist on unpopular measures to get the country on its feet, Mr. Horn said.

The socialists would never reverse the country's commitment to multi-party democracy, privatisation or financial discipline, he stressed, but they would give greater power to organised labour and demand more job protection from foreign investors.

"Someone can come in and buy a plant, shut it down, put people on the street and nothing happens to the capitalists," he complained, calling for labour unions and local governments to have a bigger say in the sell-off of state assets.

"We cannot make a single essential step without consultations and agreements with the trade unions," he added. "There will be no social peace without this."

The HSP and trade unions consult regularly and often coordinate policy, Mr. Horn said, adding that several senior labour officials will stand as HSP candidates.

The potential for a socialist come back has been helped by widespread discontent with the centre-right government that took power in 1990.

Hungarians' hopes for a better life have faded amid double-digit inflation and unemployment, a growing chasm between newly rich entrepreneurs and newly poor unskilled workers, and Mr. Antall's image as an aloof leader.

Lower House continues debate

(Continued from page 3)

Ibrahim Samara Zou'bi
(Jordanian National Front — JNF)

The coming peace imposes major burdens and challenges that will require us all to be ready to interact with them and realise positive benefits and also reduce their adverse impact on the Kingdom.

I call on the government to pursue all efforts to bolster the country's Armed Forces through continued training and the acquisition of modern weapons. I also urge it to strengthen the security services and promote their role.

aI support the government's plans for applying decentralisation in Jordan and urge it to place the right person in the right position in the public administration system.

I call on the government to speed up work on the King Abdullah Hospital at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) and urge it to do whatever is possible to improve the living conditions of civil servants.

I believe that the condition of roads is far below the required standard, and that more work has to be done to ensure an efficient water network in Jordan.

Hatem Ghzawi
(Koura and the Jordan Valley) (NAF)

I believe that the present government is trying to feel its way through the criteria set by the new world order. Any government under similar difficult circumstances would inevitably face a difficult course wrought with dangers.

We have to be brave and voice our appreciation of the government's accomplishments of the future endeavours to achieve prosperity for the Jordanian people.

We value the government's drive to enhance national unity to support the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to attain a just and durable peace, to bolster the Armed Forces and security services capabilities, to apply decentralisation and to reform the public administration system.

I support the government's drive to curb unemployment and poverty by supporting the Development and Employment Fund and the National Aid Fund and its drive to upgrade the educational system.

Aref Bataineh
(Irbid District) (PDC)

The eyes of the people's representatives will be continuously watching the government's performance and its commitment to the constants ... and we will be reminding the government of the Speech from the Throne...

The amendment of the Election Law in this manner and in this content put the government and the House in a compromising situation. I would like to ask the government on what basis it relied upon in its appointments of people to senior posts during the last six months.

When the government indicates in its statement that it is trying to increase the capacity of government hospitals it is contradicting itself when a decision by the minister of health was issued to halt the execution of a project to expand Princess Basma Hospital, the only one in the Irbid governorate.

The government was not committed to the letter of appointment concerning the continuity and implementation of projects that were initiated by former governments... which leads me to believe that this government will not be committed to its promises in the ministerial statement.

In the past few months media circles complained that the Ministry of Information was playing the role of watchdog, which drives me to call on the government to put an end to these wrong practices.

Toujan Faisal
(Amman Third District) (PDC)

Not only does the Speech from the Throne, considered as the ministerial statement, not reflect this government's traits ... also, what has been mentioned as achievements are not necessarily this government's achievements or even its trend, but an accumulation of achievements of former governments.

The most important achievement of this government was the administrative decentralisation in the governorates, that is, the government has transferred part of some ministries' authorities to the governors ... who are in fact employees of one ministry, the ministry of Interior.

It has thus increased the authorities of these governors, known for their martial practices...

This government, that did not achieve anything to solve the unemployment problem or improve incomes, had actually increased prices of the most important commodities and food items at a rate between 10-15 per cent ... a ratio that is in contradiction with the Speech from the Throne that limited it to around 4.5 per cent.

There is no one among us who does not wish peace would prevail ... but we oppose the timing and the mechanism ... in addition to the media marginalisation we suffered from. There is also an information blackout and monopoly by the negotiating team who concealed many events that were taking place.

While I am confident that Minister Rima Khalaf is capable of performing her job perfectly, I do not consider that the appointment of one woman in a senior post is a reflection of an honest drive to give women their rights, there is a large number of women who are capable of assuming leading posts ... amendments of laws are a necessity to give women their rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

I hope that we will not let ourselves and our electorates down by giving the vote of confidence to a government that has proved that it has nothing to do with democracy.

Jamil Al Hshoush
(Karak District) (PDC)

God bestowed us with a great leader who has wide experience at the international level. And since the King is leading our foreign policy, we are therefore, sure of our great future.

At the internal level, those who are looking for discrimination and Jordan for Palestine are conspiring against it and its potentials.

Jordanians and Palestinians are one people, lived together on the both sides of the Jordan River and such a negative concept based on splitting these people is brought out by colonialism.

On the administrative scale, the first step to be taken is to decrease the number of ministries we have, which does not fit with our country's size.

In the field of services, I demand equality between the Badia region and southern Jordan Valley and other areas in Jordan.

The government should build housing projects for farmers to encourage them to stick to their farms.

We are all concerned about our strategic food security and we urge the government not to let it fall in the hands of foreign powers which tamper in the daily food of our subjects.

Finally, I ask the government to set up a sports city in the southern region similar to those built in other cities in Jordan.

Daifallah Al Momani
(Ajloun District) (IAF)

In my view the successive governments in Jordan following the Gulf war were all subject to pressure and the illusion that it is better for us to accept what has been planned for us and to bear the consequences of the war without due regard to our faith and its teachings in this respect.

The way to peace is the same that was charted by our grandfathers throughout history and was successful. All other ways are doomed to failure.

According to the latin way of democracy and not the modern Western democracy, the reason for the existence of a government is to protect public interests, and if it fails to do that, it should be changed.

Only through this policy can we achieve material prosperity and happiness for people.

This government has been committing malpractices in selecting citizens to serve in senior positions. We feel that the government continues to favour certain groups and is discriminating against others as if this country is a farm owned by certain groups of people.

The same thing can be said with regard to appointments through the Civil Service Commission.

I cite a single example of a person from the Ajloun District whose application for work has been with the Civil Service commission for four years.

I withhold confidence in the government, but I hope this government would implement all the articles in its policy statement should it win Parliament's favour.

Bassam Emoush
(Zarqa District) (IAF)

Islam is not applied in Jordan as most people know, except in very limited areas.

Islam is not applied to politics, economy and social relations. Although I believe that Jordan should play a leading role in the application of Islamic rule since the Kingdom is linked to the Prophet Mohammad.

Islam provides a solution to many problems if applied by the government, political groups and individuals.

When the Islamic movement supported the previous government of Mudar Badran it stipulated that that government start applying Islamic law, but we saw no step taken towards this application so far.

I believe a referendum would prove that the majority of people in Jordan favour the application of Islamic rule.

Concerning (U.S. secretary of state Warren) Christopher's current visit I hope our foreign minister will protest to the U.S. secretary officially against (President) Clinton's meeting with Salman Rushdie who had offended the feelings of a billion Muslims.

The internationalisation of Jerusalem is rejected by the Sharia and Islamic law and all the faithful Muslims who consider the return of the whole of occupied Palestinian lands to their legitimate owners through holy war and Jihad as the proper solution.

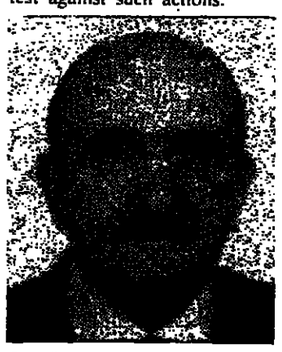
(Mr.) Arafat's agreement with Israel was a recognition of the Jewish state whose settlers continue to commit atrocities against the Palestinians.

I wonder what the present government's plans are to confront the Israeli conspiracy on Palestine and Jordan.

We support the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation), but not an organisation that concludes agreements with Israel. We are against normalising relations with the Jews.

I call for reestablishing strong relations with the Arab countries and for bolstering ties among the Arab masses in all states.

I urge the government to put an end to any interference by the American ambassador in Jordan's internal affairs. We should raise our voices in protest against such actions.



Samih Al Farah
(Amman Sixth District)

We want Jordan to serve as a model for the principles of freedom, justice and human rights, therefore we pledge to work in close cooperation with the executive authority in order to deal with the challenges lying ahead.

I thank the King for ordering that the elections be held on schedule and conducted in a free and fair atmosphere.

The past experiences proved that democracy was and is the best guarantee for political and domestic stability and the main element for enhancing national unity.

Despite the external challenges facing the Kingdom, Jordan has been able to confront the numerous problems and was successful in purusing economic reform programmes to deal with imbalances in the national economy.

On the external front, Jordan has continued its drive to support the Palestinian people in the face of Zionist occupation, and I believe we should pursue the same policies as charted by the government.

I call on the government to upgrade laws to encourage investment, promote the agricultural sector, and speed up the applications of measures to boost the industry.

My decision concerning the vote of confidence will be taken in light of the government's response to the demands of my bloc: that it consult with Parliament in future Cabinet reshuffles, achieve justice in the appointment of people in government positions, formulate a new election law that caters to the present stage of Jordan's political life, re-examine legislation concerning taxation and improve the living conditions of military and civilian personnel employed by the government.

Anwar Al Hadid
Amman Fourth District (PDC)

We do not have in front of us a clear programme. We only have a prime minister, who has a great desire to give a clear image of political work, and ministers whom we have known for a long time though their previous positions.

We are satisfied with some of them, but realise that the others are not able to shoulder the responsibility ... and if I were to make a decision on this government's programme, without considering its members, then our acquaintance with the extent of authority, the ministers' authorities, and their style in tackling matters make us fear for this programme.

I am aware that Jordan's problems with the Israeli enemy are solvable, but I fear that we might have fallen into the trap of unilateral solutions that will yield nothing tangible for Palestine, its sons, and the Arab nation.

As long as Jerusalem is the symbol of the Islamic and Arab nations' party, then will we be steadfast in our positions towards this issue, which Jordan has no right to abandon, so that Jerusalem will continue to be Arab Islamic?

If normalisation is to be attained with the enemy, then it must only be achieved after the attainment of a just and comprehensive peace on all fronts.

If Arab and Islamic solidarity is a rightful demand, then there is an urgent need to revise our political dealings with all the Arab and Islamic countries so as to attain solidarity without restoring to provocations.

The administrative system is irrepairable unless a miracle takes place; and since these are not the days of miracles, the government must be able to stop further deterioration.

The government's duty is to provide subsidised housing to the poor as well as rehabilitate and help the expatriates who returned from the Gulf countries, else this will have negative impacts on the society.

The social security system is merely a social insurance system that only applies to those who can afford it. When will it cover all the sons of this homeland?

My position toward the government will be taken after I hear its response to my views.

Mohammad Al Haj
(Zarqa District) (IAF)

The people who had entrusted us to be their representatives certainly want us to be honest and loyal in assuming this responsibility ... the Jordanian people are an Arab Muslim people who are proud of Islam as a Sharia, civilisation and faith ... this constant means that the people are keen on being governed by Islamic

Sharia ...

I call on the government, if it obtains the vote of confidence, to translate these words, complete cooperation and coordination among all Arab countries, into action.

To relinquish grain of a our blessed land's soil is a big crime ... we ask, where is this permanent, honourable and just peace, do we find it in our government's support of the Gaza-Jericho agreement?

That weak deal that did not preserve this nation's dignity and did not guarantee the minimum level of its right ... that agreement that ignored our historical right in Jerusalem and our natural right of return ....

When I read the articles in the Constitution concerning the rights of Jordanians and their duties, I found honestly that the government is not committed to any of these .... starting with acceptance in universities and ending with appointments.

With all my due respect and appreciation to the prime minister whom I knew as a president of the University of Jordan while I was a student ... I believe that a government that accepted to dissolve to impose a law that was rejected by deputies and senators ... and does not seek to implement the Islamic Sharia is a government that is not worth the people's confidence.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Amman mayor leaves for Egypt

AMMAN (Petra) — Amman Governor Mamdouh Al Abbadi Saturday left for Alexandria, Egypt, to attend a three-day meeting of the Arab Cities and Capitals Organisation. The meeting is called to discuss the organisation's achievements during the past period in the fields of finance, administration, information, foreign affairs and the cities development fund.

Phosphate company adopts joint venture policy

AMMAN (Petra) — Managing Director of Jordanian Phosphate Company (JPC) Sameh Madani said the company exerts efforts to preserve its status in the international market and increase its share if possible. At a meeting with JPC's employees, Mr. Madani said that the company is currently adopting a joint ventures policy to enable it to meet the company's expenses. Until now, the company succeeded in striking deals with Indian and Japanese companies.

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Course	Starting Date	Class Hours	Duration
Nursery Foundation	December 11th 1993	3:45- 7:30 pm	Ten Weeks
Primary	January 15th 1993	3:45- 7:30 pm	Ten Weeks

For registration and further details please call the administration on the above telephone number as soon as possible as the number of students that may be accommodated is limited

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Three years on, Kuwait still counts war losses

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait, three years on, is still calculating its losses from Iraq's occupation and preliminary estimates of $170 billion may rise, an official said Monday.

Adel Assam, general manager of the Public Authority for Assessment of Compensations for damages resulting from Iraqi aggression, said the $170 billion figure did not include the sum Kuwait plans to claim from Baghdad for cleaning up environmental damage caused by its seven-month occupation in 1990-91.

Nor did it include the final cost of major damage such as *that to installations of the* state-owned oil industry, he said.

"We are still processing individual, corporate and government claims," he said in an interview. "For example the oil sector is still finalising its claim ... we have just set up a committee to work on the environmental claim."

Under Gulf war ceasefire terms Iraq must compensate all losses caused by its invasion and occupation.

Baghdad will be required to pay through a U.N. compensation committee (UNCC) a third of oil revenues when it is allowed to resume exports.

Mr. Assam said the $170 billion figure did not reflect the cost of cleaning oil pollution caused by oil fires set by Iraqis or of removing hundreds of thousands of Iraqi mines. The mine-clearing is in its final months.

He said the sum of $170 billion was made up of two portions — losses falling within categories defined as claimable from Baghdad under rules set by the UNCC, and those falling outside.

Losses falling within the UNCC categories came to about $117 billion at the moment. If losses falling outside were added, the total comes to $170 billion, he said.

He said Reuters incorrectly reported Saturday that Kuwait would claim about $117 billion from the U.N. committee, when in fact this figure was only total losses so far calculated.

Oil revenue forfeited during the occupation and the repairing of oilfields was claimable via the UNCC and was part of the $117 billion figure, as was interest due on the losses. He said interest was an approved item under U.N. rules.

He said Reuters incorrectly reported Saturday that forfeited oil sales would not be claimable via the UNCC.

He said the $117 billion figure did not include the still uncalculated cost of the environmental damage or the final amount of other losses claimable via the UNCC, he said.

China to spend $140b on transport upgrade

BEIJING (R) — China plans to spend more than 700 billion yuan ($140 billion) on a range of projects to upgrade its transport infrastructure during the 1990s, the official Xinhua News Agency has said.

Xinhua said the ambitious plan would include expanding the nation's railway network to 70,000 kilometres from the current 53,000 kilometres and bring highways to 1.2 million kilometres fro m the present 1.02 million kilometres.

China also hopes to increase its deepwater berths to more than 600 from the current 300 as well as undertake major expansion of the country's pipeline and air transport systems, Xinhua said.

"To accomplish the objectives, China will, in addition to its own efforts, take bolder steps to encourage foreign investors to invest in this sector," Xinhua said.

"While continuing to use loans provided by the World Bank and foreign governments, China will welcome foreign investors to run joint ventures or solely-owned ventures in the construction of railways and highways and civil aviation facilities other than the air-control system," it said without giving further details.

Transport has been a major bottleneck during China's past decade of high-speed growth, with infrastructure lagging far behind the fast-growing need for both passenger and cargo traffic.

Croatia plans price and tax cuts to boost economy

ZAGREB (R) — Croatia will soon cut taxes and prices for energy following a drastic reduction in war-induced inflation. Prime Minister Nikica Valentic has said.

He spoke a day after announcing that inflation had been slashed to 1.4 per cent in November from more than 40 per cent in September, a turnabout brought about by a curb on printing and issuing of Croatia's dinar currency.

"We crushed the hyperinflation before the deadline, at very little expense," Mr. Valentic was quoted by the state news agency Hina as telling a gathering of Zagreb businessmen.

"When we started the anti-inflation programme (in October) we were sure inflation would fall under five per cent a month but did not say so then as it would have seemed foolish — it didn't (seem) realistic," he said. "So November inflation took even us by surprise."

The anti-inflation drive in the former Yugoslav republic of 4.6 million people included strict limits on wage increases and a new flat import tax of 10 per cent.

Mr. Valentic said there would be considerable room for prices to be lowered, including oil, electricity and postal and telecommunications services.

"With lower domestic prices we're aiming at strengthening real exchange rates and we think we'll stabilise them at a level that will stimulate exports and guarantee lower prices," he pointed out.

Mr. Valentic said the government was planning to lower all taxes and duties and introduce measures to improve tax collection at the same time.

The dinar has strengthened from 4,400 to the German mark at the start of October to 3,500 now.

Its sudden rise after losing value almost daily is widely thought to have been produced by the central bank limiting the amount of money issued to banks for the purchase of hard currency to $32 million a month.

The dinar lost 1,800 per cent of its value in the first nine months of the year due to excessive printing by the government, whose budget is heavily burdened by war with rebel Serbs holding a third of the country.

Mr. Valentic also said Croatia was expecting the first portions of a $400 million World Bank credit for rebuilding of its war-damaged infrastructure.

Among branches of industry which deserved the government's special attention were industry and tourism, Mr. Valentic said.

Germany wants EC law against car thefts in 1994

BONN (R) — Germany wants the European Community (EC) to introduce a law in 1994 making it mandatory for new cars to have electronic anti-theft devices, officials have said.

Government ministers, the police, car industry and insurance company officials agreed at a meeting that major steps must be taken to combat a wave of car thefts since East European borders opened in 1989.

Transport Minister Matthias Wissmann said 130,000 cars were stolen in Germany last year, up 30 per cent from 1991. More than 60,000 have not been found, suggested that they had been driven to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

He said other Western countries such as France and Italy were also hit badly. Car thefts cost insurance companies in Germany alone about 1.5 billion marks ($880 million) last year

Mr. Wissmann said the government was using a twin-track approach under which voluntary steps by the car industry to improve protection were coupled with efforts to standardise EC guidelines on anti-theft devices.

"It is our goal to push through this initiative in the European Community already ion 1994," he told a news conference.

Officials said the German car industry, under pressure from insurance companies, had voluntarily started fitting some new models with electronic devices that are hard to crack even for East European gangs that specialise in stealing expensive cars.

Dieter Zetsche, board member of Mercedes-Benz A.G., said the luxury car maker was equipping new models with electronic immobilisers to prevent unauthorised drivers from starting cars.

Bruno Gas, who heads the Association of German Insurance Companies, said insurers had started refusing comprehensive insurance to luxury car owners without electronic immobilisers.

Without such devices, owners will only regain 90 per cent of the value of a stolen car, he said.

Insurance companies in particular want the immobilisers, which block petrol supplies and stop a driver unable to give the proper electronic signal from activating the ignition, to be coupled under law with better door and steering wheel locks.

Interior Minister Manfred Kanther, who hosted the meeting, said statistics showed that luxury cars like Mercedes, BMW, Audi and Porsche topped the list of those which were not recovered after being stolen.

Mr. Kanther predicted that all cars, new as well as used, would eventually be equipped with more effective anti-theft devices.

IMF delays $1.55 billion ESAF funding to Pakistan

KARACHI, Pakistan (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has delayed funding of $1.55 billion to *finance structural reforms in* Pakistan after Islamabad failed to meet two vital benchmarks, official sources have said.

The economic structural adjustment facility (ESAF) package was to be presented to the IMF board by Nov. 30, but was postponed until February 1994 to give Pakistan time to meet the fund's requirements, the sources said.

The IMF is also waiting to see if Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto will be able to push through a new agriculture tax.

The two benchmarks that Pakistan failed to meet were in raising foreign exchange reserves, slashed by months of political instability and large debt repayments, and in reducing government bank borrowing, the sources said.

Among conditions for the $1.55 billion, including the IMF's ESAF, the extended fund facility and the World Bank's public sector adjustment loan (PSAL), Pakistan must cut its fiscal deficit to 5.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1993/94 (July-June) from 7.5 per cent last year.

Bank borrowing hit 22 billion rupees ($733 million) in the first three weeks of July compared with a 20 billion-rupee target for the year.

The fiscal position was improving, with the overall deficit in the first quarter in line with the target for the year, state (central) Bank of Pakistan Governor Mohammad Yaqub told Reuters.

"The issue is financing," he said. "Expenditure is on track but non-bank sourcing is not on track, but this should be only transitional."

He said economic management was becoming more disciplined, with money supply growing at 14 per cent, compared with growth of between 18 and 20 per cent last year.

Money supply grew just 3.7 per cent in the first quarter, down from seven per cent in the corresponding period last year.

Credit growth to the private sector was well within official guidelines, halved from last year to five per cent in the first quarter, he said.

"Only the government sector needs more discipline to bring down borrowing," he said.

Foreign exchange reserves were rising quickly, boosted by the arrival of the first installment of the world bank's PSAL, aimed at improving balance of payments, he said.

Reserves stood at $378 at the end of October, but have risen rapidly in the last month on rising exports and growing confidence in political stability to hit nearly $800 million last week.

Pakistan must improve foreign exchange reserves, which fell to less than two weeks of imports in July, cut inflation to five per cent from more than 10 per cent and average GDP growth of 6.5 per cent over the next three years under the ESAF terms.

Mr. Yaqub said economic growth was showing signs of substantial improvement for 1993/94, after falling to a record low of three per cent the previous year.

Sources close to the IMF said the delay in submitting the package would allow Pakistan more time to meet targets, adding that if a preliminary proposal had been presented and then been withdrawn it would have been more difficult to reapply.

Among the most crucial condition for the ESAF lies in Pakistan's first tax on agricultural income, that was passed by the previous, interim government. It must be presented to the new national assembly (lower house) for approval within four months.

Cuba produces record one million tonnes of oil

HAVANA (R) — Cuba has said it had produced one million tonnes of crude oil so far in calendar 1993, a record for domestic production on the communist-ruled Caribbean island. Cuba, whose fuel imports have dived to less than half the amount it imported in the late 1980s when it had oil-for-sugar deals with the former Soviet Union, has been seeking to boost dometic production and save hard currency. The official Communist Party newspaper Granma said oil workers had extracted one million tonnes of domestic crude from January to Nov. 25. Hailing the record with a front-page photograph of an oil worker, the newspaper stressed that every tone of oil produced at home saved precious hard currency. Most of Cuba's domestic oil is from the northern coast around Varadero, east of Havana.

Nigeria 's new ruler faces tough economic task

LAGOS (R) — Nigeria's new military ruler faces a daunting task to revive an economy crippled by cash shortages, lack of investor confidence and incoherent policies, analysts said.

"The economy is on the verge of collapse," said Adekunle Olumide, director general of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce.

General Sani Abacha took charge last month at a time when the economy was at its lowest ebb since ex-military ruler Ibrahim Babangida began a structural adjustment programme (SAP) in 1986.

"It's not going to be easy job mending the economy," said Uzor Okeke, acting head of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria. "This has been one of the worst years for the economy."

General Abacha, who was defence minister in Babangida's government and that of Ernest Shonekan, inherited an economy weighed down by huge foreign debts, low productivity, corruption, mismanagement and political unrest.

The private sector will be looking to the new government to introduce measures to turn things around.

"What we want is a reactivation of the economy and stability of the foreign exchange system. Something also has to be done about interest rates, which are now too high," Mr. Okeke said.

The oil-fuelled economy recorded gains during the early years of SAP with annual growth reaching 8.1 per cent in 1990.

But growth has since fallen and is expected to be less than three per cent this year.

Nigeria's western creditors blame the decline on the abandonment by Babangida's administration of SAP, including foreign exchange deregulation and privatisation.

They said the government's reckless spending and failure to take difficult economic decisions threw the reforms off track.

However, Mr. Okeke blamed the external orientation of Babangida's SAP policies for the economic woes.

"The SAP was supposed to reduce external dependency but the way we dealt with trade liberalisation turned Nigeria into a cash and carry economy," Mr. Okeke said.

Local businessmen will be looking to Gen. Abacha to place greater emphasis on increasing local production by directing more resources to facilitate the growth of the private sector.

They want the government to curb spending on non-productive sectors and review expenditure on dubious schemes like the steel complex and aluminium smelter projects.

The main constraint facing Gen. Abacha in stimulating economic growth is probably a lack of cash, analysts said.

Ex-oil secretary Don Etiebet said recently when justifying a 600 per cent hike in fuel prices that the government was broke.

He said the government's accounts were in the red and Nigeria needed $10 billion to settle the debts of the state oil company, repair refineries and service foreign debts.

Gen. Abacha's government will probably continue its predecessors' efforts to strike a deal with the International Monetary Fund to qualify for debt write-off of a large portion of the roughly $30 billion Nigeria owes mainly Western creditors.

Though Western governments kept symbolic sanctions against Mr. Shonekan's unelected government, his administration, which was dominated by people from the private sector, made some headway with creditor institutions and Nigeria's main trading partners.

It is not clear what attitude the West will adopt to Gen. Abacha's government.

"Right now it's difficult to tell what he stands for and plans to do," one Western diplomat said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY DECEMBER 7, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: The triple Moon sextile to Pluto, Mercury and Venus makes communication easier with a positive connection between mind and emotions. This is an especially good day to conduct business or engage in writing of any sort.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Early confusion where a worldly interest is concerned is soon followed by the ability to be off to new interest and to make headway with them.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Stick to what has been found satisfactory in your life and don't go off on a wild goose chase that you have had little experience about.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) An obligation that is of concern to you should be put off until a more propitious moment while you do what you know will please your attachment.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) An outside matter can bring you some discredit if pursued so make a point to keep busy whatever your task is and you make real progress.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Don't take any chances in trying to pull the wool over your attachments eyes but seek better ways under which to get your important points across.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) A vacillating partner can keep you upset about a joint course of action so attend to your part of whatever bargain has been already been decided upon.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Work can have a series of muddled conditions so be careful to be exact in doing them and get the assistance of a worldly person of experience.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Think about how you can smooth the ruffled feathers of a close companion and put your greatest amount of effort in enthusiastically doing your tasks.

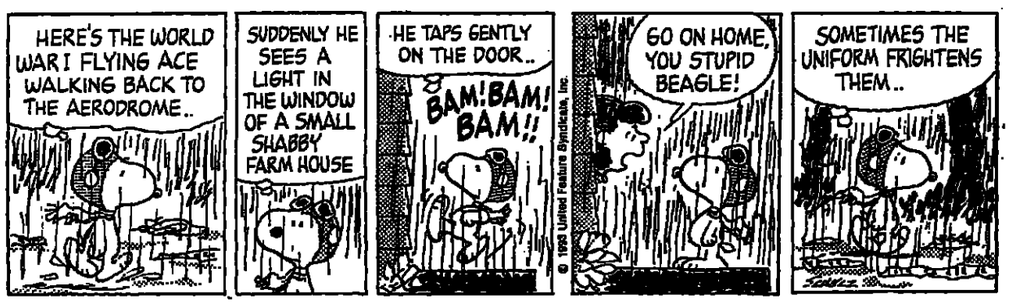
SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Let some condition you do not understand at home work itself out which is the best way, instead be off with mate to some entertainment you both like.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Think about how to rise above some problem involving papers, reports or information that confuses you and tonight enjoy pleasures at home now.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You can err in your judgement concerning practical ways to handle a business matter unless you get all pertinent data from some outside sources.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You are not sure just what you want early in the day so wait until after noon when you have all sorts of new and good ideas for your future advancement.

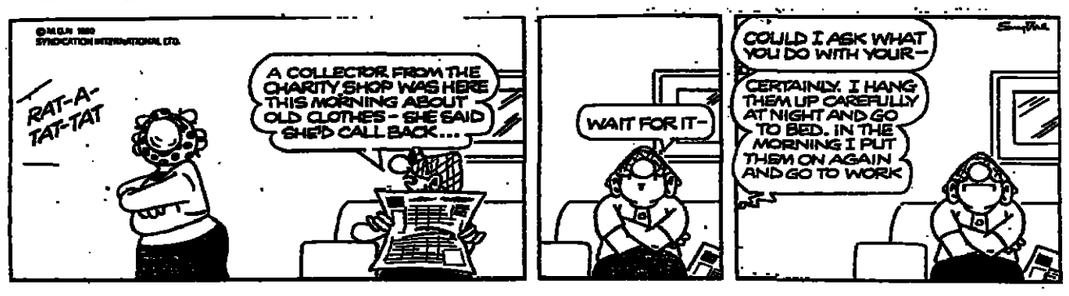
Peanuts



THE BETTER HALF® By Harris

"Whenever I feel like you don't love me anymore I just fall to pieces!"

Andy Capp



JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, *one letter to each square, to form* four ordinary words.

TABLO

NUEQE

SMUQIR

GODINI

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

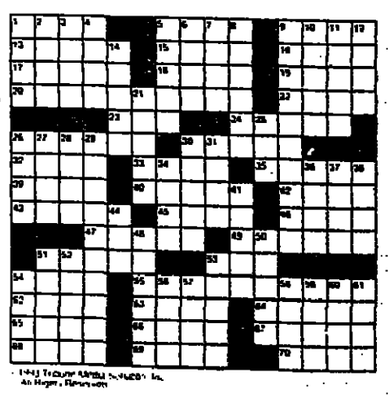
Print answer here: THE

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: BANJO PURGE MARTIN BEADLE

Answer: What the king did after his coronation — "REIGNED"

THE Daily Crossword by Roger Coburn



ACROSS
1 Speed of sound word
5 Jedi teacher
9 Curtner and —
13 Escort
15 Home of Philips U
16 Actress Merrill
17 Sordid
18 Teen problem
19 — impasse (deadlocked)
20 Treasury in Topeka?
22 Toppers
23 Same
24 Garlock
26 Rest
30 Brainstorms
32 Shard
33 Painter Guido
35 Spike used in mountain climbing
39 Gascony girlfriend
40 Surfeits
42 Sea eagle
43 Scope
45 Reject
46 Regrets
47 Stranger
49 Strata
51 Evens or Lavin
53 Took charge
54 Criticizes
55 Reno runner?
62 Talented
63 Hoot sound
64 Silly person
65 Bard
66 Big bros
67 Happily
68 B.A. wind
69 Rambler
70 Pitcher Hershiser

DOWN
1 Natural scent
2 Confused
3 Sleuth Charlie
4 Skirt bottoms
5 Baker's need
6 Formerly
7 Force
8 — Ideles
9 Stockings from Boise?
10 Necessary
11 Relative on mother's side
12 Without
14 Pitcher Nolan and family
21 Prophets
25 Chance
26 Leonine sound
27 Ms Samms
28 Soreness
29 Solem's beginnings?
30 Between pref
31 Regimen
34 Roof overhang
36 Accurate
37 Humdinger
38 Gapone's nemesis
41 Repaired shoes
44 "Kookie" Byrnes
48 Baryshnikov, e.g.
50 Saying
51 Toil
52 Creek
53 Declare
54 Family member
56 Mariner's saint
57 RSVP word.
58 Han of "Star Wars"
59 Frost
60 Noble Italian family
61 Spool

Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:

Mutt'n'Jeff

هكذا من الأصل

Etisalat approves $463m spending in '94

DUBAI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) telecommunications firm Etisalat has approved expenditure of 1.7 billion dirhams (463 million) in 1994 including a cable link with Kuwait, almost doubling spending in 1993.

The Emirates news agency said Sunday the board of directors approved the plan which earmarks 98 million dirhams ($27 million) for an underwater cable link with Kuwait.

The rest of the money will be used to enlarge and upgrade telephone networks and set up 174,000 new phone lines.

Expenditure in 1994 could reach 1.9 billion dirhams ($517 million) for costs from projects carried over from 1993.

Etisalat's 1994 budget is almost double the 1993 figure of 1.06 billion dirhams ($288 million).

The company monopolises the telecommunications services sector in the UAE but last April it lifted a ban on equipment sales by other companies.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 660170 / 663170
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 06/12/1993

COMPANY'S NAME	TRADED VOLUME JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK	428,900	185.000	187.000	187.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	39,038	6.120	6.100	6.150
BANK OF JORDAN	15,317	4.070	4.150	4.200
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK.	12,088	1.910	1.930	1.940
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	20,517	3.990	4.000	3.980
THE HOUSING BANK	4,645	5.700	5.700	5.700
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	22,053	2.970	3.040	3.020
JORDAN GULF BANK	384,777	1.630	1.670	1.710
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	7,308	3.900	3.950	3.950
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	35,834	4.200	4.300	4.230
UNION BANK FOR SAVING & INVESTMENT	16,748	4.800	4.850	4.850
BUSINESS BANK	8,800	4.400	4.400	4.400
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	18,168	6.500	6.600	6.600
BEIT ELMAL SAVINGS&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	3,074	4.400	4.400	4.400
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	601,832	1.810	1.840	1.860
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	66,914	2.380	2.400	2.390
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	11,385	3.470	3.500	3.500
ARAB LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	2,250	3.000	3.000	3.000
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	74,707	2.200	2.210	2.240
VEHICLES OWNERS FEDERATION	574	6.600	6.750	6.750
JORDAN TOURISM & SPA COMPLEX	225	0.950	0.900	0.900
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	10,338	3.770	3.850	3.900
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	4,011	1.660	1.680	1.660
PETRA ENTERPRISES & EQUIPMENTS LEASING	1,870	0.950	0.920	0.950
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	291	1.800	1.710	1.710
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / ALRA'I	4,363	14.450	14.250	14.600
JORDAN PRESS & PUBLISHING /AD-DUSTOUR	3,450	13.800	13.800	13.800
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	86,868	2.150	2.160	2.180
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	14,207	2.700	2.710	2.710
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	263,979	2.950	2.960	3.020
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINARY	4,596	9.670	9.720	9.760
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	18,163	7.240	7.250	7.390
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	72,805	10.950	11.000	11.000
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	81,528	8.260	8.280	8.290
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	1,142	7.250	7.050	7.050
JORDAN DAIRY	660	2.900	2.970	3.050
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	1,870	3.720	3.740	3.740
SPINNING & WEAVING	28,622	2.750	2.780	2.860
RAPTA INDUSTRIES	1,035	2.360	2.300	2.300
JORDAN GLASS INDUSTRIES	3,645	0.370	0.380	0.380
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	78,530	15.000	15.100	15.000
ARAB INVESTMENT & INTERNATIONAL TRADE	99,648	2.090	2.140	2.190
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	44,348	10.000	10.140	10.000
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	8,375	1.570	1.590	1.600
JORDAN MEDICAL CORPORATION	7,010	0.390	0.390	0.410
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	1,016	5.000	5.080	5.080
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	5,248	3.520	3.500	3.500
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	3,350	2.200	2.200	2.300
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	7,686	6.200	6.360	6.450
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JIMCO	42,484	1.120	1.140	1.140
JORDAN PRECAST CONCRETE INDUSTRY	2,450	0.370	0.370	0.380
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	52,350	8.050	8.100	8.120
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	7,287	3.350	3.400	3.450
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	10,595	3.110	3.220	3.240
JORDAN KUWAIT CO. FOR AGRI. & FOOD PROD.	4,070	1.330	1.360	1.350
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	39,670	5.120	5.130	5.170
GRAND TOTAL	2,790,910			

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 3/12/93	Tokyo Close Date 6/12/93
Sterling Pound*	1.4905	1.4945
Deutsche Mark	1.7200	1.7105
Swiss Franc	1.4900	1.4828
French Franc	5.9120	5.8937**
Japanese Yen	108.55	108.18
European Currency Unit	1.1190	1.1245**

* USD Per STG
** European Opening to 8:00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates Date: 6/12/1993

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	3.31	3.37	3.37	3.75
Sterling Pound	5.12	5.06	5.00	5.00
Deutsche Mark	6.37	6.06	5.68	5.18
Swiss Franc	4.37	4.25	3.81	3.62
French Franc	6.62	6.37	6.00	5.56
Japanese Yen	2.15	1.90	1.81	1.75
European Currency Unit	6.67	6.37	6.13	5.62

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 6/12/1993

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7000	0.7020
Sterling Pound	1.0449	1.0501
Deutsche Mark	0.4088	0.4108
Swiss Franc	0.4717	0.4741
French Franc	0.1188	0.1194
Japanese Yen*	0.6466	0.6498
Dutch Guilder	0.3646	0.3664

Other Currencies Date: 6/12/1993

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8350	1.8610
Lebanese Lira*	0.040355	0.041285
Saudi Riyal	0.1830	0.1883
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.2250	2.3200
Qatari Riyal	0.1885	0.1915
Egyptian Pound	0.2050	0.2220
Omani Riyal	1.7800	1.8250
UAE Dirham	0.1885	0.1915
Greek Drachma*	0.2815	0.3225
Cypriot Pound	1.3375	1.3745

* Per 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

U.S. $1.00 costs	1.3269/79	Canadian dollar
	1.7102/12	Deutschemarks
	1.9172/81	Dutch guilders
	1.4807/17	Swiss francs
	35.94/98	Belgian francs
	5.8783/33	French francs
	1695.3/6.8	Italian lire
	108.30/40	Japanese yen
	8.3712/12	Swedish crowns
	7.4190/40	Norwegian crowns
	6.7465/15	Danish crowns
One sterling	$1.4935/45	
One ounce of gold	$376.65/377.15	

Lebanon to slash taxes to 10%

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon plans radical tax cuts in 1994 in its all-out bid to attract talent and investors and win back its position as a Middle East financial centre, Finance Minister Fuad Siniora said.

Personal income tax and corporate tax will be slashed to 10 per cent as part of an effort "to really give the private sector a great deal of advantages and incentives," Mr. Siniora told Reuters in a weekend interview.

He expected a draft tax law now before parliament to be approved by the end of the year and take effect at the beginning of 1994.

"For corporations it will be a flat rate of 10 per cent and five per cent on distribution. As far as individuals are concerned the highest bracket will pay about 10 per cent," Mr. Siniora said. "I believe that this will be passed by parliament before year end, to take effect at the beginning of the year."

Lebanon's highest personal income tax bracket is now 43 per cent, Mr. Siniora said. The corporate tax ceiling is 35 per cent.

"Our objective in this is to really render this country attractive for new investment, particularly for Lebanese but for non-Lebanese as well," he said.

Mr. Siniora, appointed finance minister by billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri when he took office in October 1992, said the tax cuts would actually boost government income.

"We are confident that this will result in collecting more tax revenues for the government," he said.

The cuts are just part of the Hariri government's drive to attract capital and talent back to Beirut.

A new governor and management team at the central bank has already launched a crash programme to revive the Beirut foreign exchange, equities, debt and money markets.

Mr. Siniora said the government could not afford to burden investors with heavy taxes when they had many opportunities and alternatives in other Middle Eastern countries.

"One has to take into consideration the new investment law that was passed by Syria... what is happening in Egypt and in Dubai. All these countries are giving lots of incentives for new investment," he said.

Mr. Siniora said there was no reliable information on tax evasion in Lebanon because of lack of statistics since the 1975-90 civil war but he believed the tax cuts would reduce the phenomenon.

"From the information we have been gathering from businesses... we came to the conclusion that by doing so (cutting taxes) they will definitely avoid all the tricks that they have been resorting to in the past to avoid paying taxes," he emphasised.

He estimated that double book-keeping and other non-transparent practices was costing companies nearly 10 per cent.

"So we believe that the 10 per cent taxation we will be imposing now will really result in much better collection and a much higher amount of revenue that will accrue to the government," he pointed out.

He said the government was already making spectacular progress in collection and revenues for the first 10 months of 1993 were up 86 per cent on the same period of 1992.

Mr. Siniora said he expected the final 1993 budget deficit to be 40-42 per cent of expenditure compared with 50 per cent forecast in the budget.

S. Africa plans to open trade centre in Dubai

ABU DHABI (AFP) — South Africa is planning to open a commercial office in the Gulf's main economic centre of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to boost exports to the region, Dubai officials have said.

The office will be set up after South Africa and the UAE establish diplomatic relations, said Abdullah Abu Al Houl, public relations director at the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"It is a decision by the South African government, which informed us of the plans during our recent visit to Pretoria," he told AFP by telephone. "But of course you cannot open a trade centre when you do not have diplomatic relations. Once a South African embassy is opened in the UAE, the centre will open. It's just a matter of time."

Dubai, the second largest and wealthiest emirate in the UAE, is the biggest commercial centre in the Gulf, handling nearly 25 per cent of the region's non-oil trade of more than $50 billion a year.

It is also the main trans-shipment centre in the region, with reexports going to more than 100 countries.

But Iran and Saudi Arabia have remained its top reexport markets, receiving goods worth around $800 million and $700 million respectively in 1992.

More than 30 countries have trade offices in Dubai while others are planning to set them up in a bid to penetrate other markets.

South Africa's plan to open a commercial centre follows a dramatic growth in its trade links with the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states after they lifted the anti-apartheid boycott in response to reforms there.

Its trade with the six members — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE — exceeded $30 million in the first half of 1993 while it was negligible during the sanctions.

Most of the trade this year was with Dubai, standing at around $25 milion.

Domestic consumption blunting Iranian oil output rises

MANAMA (R) — Fast-rising domestic consumption in Iran is blunting the effect of the nation's higher crude oil production, Iranian-American energy analyst Fereidun Fesharaki has said.

"Consumption is growing wild even though they're in a massive recession," Mr. Fesharaki, director of the resource programme at Hawaii's East-West Centre, told Reuters in an interview.

The reason, he said, is massive subsidies yielding a price that is negligible in dollar terms.

"The price is almost non-existent," he said.

Kerosene, used widely in Iran for heating, was going for the equivalent of one U.S. cent per litre and petrol for less than three cents a litre.

Only Russia had lower prices, he said.

Consumption of refined products was rising seven per cent this year — petrol was rising 12 per cent this year, and diesel and kerosene 10 per cent. Only fuel oil consumption was not growing, he said.

"(Oil) exports are not coming out commensurate with production increases, because of the rise in domestic demand," said Mr. Fesharaki, in Bahrain to promote the January 16-18 Middle East petroleum and gas conference to be held on the island.

He said that this year and last year Iranian consumption had risen a total of about 200,000 barrels per day (b/d).

Iran said officially that in October it consumed one million b/d and exported 2.58 million b/d, within its 3.58 million b/d quota set by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

The higher consumption meant Iran needed to build a new refinery every couple of years to keep up with domestic demand.

Iranian Oil Minister Gholamreza Aqazadeh had said in April that as the result of new refinery work the country would no longer have to import products from the start of the Iranian new year in March.

One of the projects, a 150,000 b/d plant in Arak, is scheduled to be fully up and running in December, but Mr. Fesharaki said the general assumption was that Iran would still need to import 200,000 b/d of products after that.

Expansion of large refinery in Abadan was running behind schedule, he said, and a new plant planned for Bandar Abbas has been delayed till 1995.

The Iranian consumption continued to provide solid demand for products from elsewhere in the Gulf, he said.

Mr. Fesharaki said he also believed Iranian oil production was below its quota in November because of difficulty of marketing the crude.

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Italy's left stakes claim to govern after poll win

ROME (R) — Left-wing opposition leader Achille Occhetto laid claim Monday to lead Italy's next government after candidates backed by his formerly Communist Party triumphed in weekend local elections.

"If, as in Britain, the leader of the largest party is named prime minister, I would be a natural candidate," Mr. Occhetto said after the left-wing alliances running for city halls crushed separatists in the North and Neo-Fascists in the rest of Italy.

"Our next aim is the government," the leader of the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) proclaimed on television as the extent of Sunday's landslide became clear.

"Let's now prepare for a victory in March," he said, referring to the month when general elections are expected.

Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi was named last April to guide Italy to early elections and redress Italy's disastrous public finances. His main task will be finished when parliament approves the 1994 budget, due to be passed before Christmas.

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro is expected to dissolve parliament soon after Dec. 21, the earliest elections can be called under a new first-past-the-post voting system.

The PDS speaker of the lower house of parliament, Giorgio Napolitano, said over the weekend that Mr. Ciampi's government would become a caretaker cabinet on Dec. 21.

Mr. Occhetto immediately set his sights on the premiership after the local elections showed middle-ground voters were ready to back the former Communists when faced with a choice between the left and two extreme alternatives on the right.

The Christian Democrats, who have has dominated Italian politics for nearly half a century, and other traditionally centrist parties were eliminated in the first round, punished by voters for their role in Italy's massive corruption scandal.

The Democratic Party of the Left, heir to what was once the West's largest Communist movement, emerged as Italy's second-largest party Sunday, just behind the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI).

But the new voting system rewarded its ability to form broad coalitions and gave PDS-backed candidates control of five main cities — Rome, Naples, Venice, Genoa and Trieste.

The national implications of Sunday's vote were immediately recognised by Mr. Occhetto's defeated rivals.

"The left is now a candidate to lead the next government. If Italians want to avoid this, alliances must be formed with the MSI in the general elections," said the neo-fascist party's leader, Gianfranco Fini.

"We cannot win unless the right agrees to form alliances," said Mr. Fini, who polled 46.9 per cent in the race to become mayor of Rome but was defeated by PDS candidate Francesco Rutelli.

Mr. Fini's other big hope, Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of wartime fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, lost the Naples mayoral race to PDS candidate Antonio Bassolino.

Sunday's other big loser, Umberto Bossi, head of the federalist Northern League, warned Italians that they risked giving the left 60 per cent of the seats in the next parliament if the voting pattern was repeated in general elections.

Mainstream parties fear the league wants to break Italy up, but Mr. Occhetto said the northern movement's once seemingly irresistible rise had been stopped. "They wanted to split the country... but we have stopped them at Milan," he said.

The jockeying for position for the 1994 general elections began as soon as the first exist polls confirmed the left's victory.

Mr. Fini publicly appealed to Mr. Bossi and Mr. Mario Segni, a former Christian Democrat who is trying to build a new centre party, to throw in their lot with him in a right-wing alliance.

The League, painfully aware that its political isolation cost it the weekend vote even though it is the single largest party in Italy's wealthy north, also held a hand out to Mr. Segni.

Mr. Occhetto, the day's big winner, appealed to his allies to agree quickly on a government programme that would retain the support of centrist voters orphaned by the virtual extinction of the scandal-tainted Christian Democrats.

East German spymaster gets 6 years

DUESSELDORF, Germany (R) — Former East German spymaster Markus Wolf was sentenced Monday to six years in jail for treason and bribery in running a feared network of agents against West Germany during the cold war.

Communist supporters booed when the court in Duesseldorf ruled that Mr. Wolf, 70, was guilty of three counts of espionage and seven of bribery when he headed the intelligence network that infiltrated the highest levels of power in Bonn.

Mr. Wolf, who had said he expected to be convicted because it was a political trial, kept his trademark bemused smile as the verdict was read out.

"I don't expect any surprises here," he said as he entered the courtroom with a dozen red roses presented to him by supporters." I am as relaxed as ever."

The court did not order the immediate arrest of Wolf, who had sought refuge in Moscow after German unification but later gave himself up, and did not say how long he would remain free.

Germany's federal constitutional court must now rule on whether he can legally be tried for treason against a country of, which he was not a citizen — West Germany — while in the service of the East German state that no longer exists.

Legal experts are divided on whether the constitution allows this and a decision is not expected until mid-1994.

Rebutting Mr. Wolf's eloquent defence, Chief Judge Klaus Wagner said, "this verdict is not a political verdict."

"Perhaps because of his experience with Soviet justice, the defendant has completely misunderstood the ground rules of a state of law," he said.

"He has not been convicted as a symbol of the departed East Germany but rather because of his responsibility for espionage against West Germany."

Judge Wagner argued that Mr. Wolf should have cooperated with Western prosecutors instead of refusing to reveal his secrets as a matter of honour. "If Wolf does not think he can compromise his honour, then that's his business," he added.

Mr. Wolf had argued it was illegal to try him for the same cloak-and-dagger work for the East that his counterparts had done for the West.

Former East German spymaster Markus Wolf stands in Duesseldorf court Monday for sentencing (AFP photo)

One of the witnesses at the trial was German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, who was once Mr. Wolf's opposite number in Bonn's BND intelligence service.

Demonstrators outside the court held banners reading "hands off Wolf" and "free Wolf now"

"This is to show our stand against victors' justice," a spokeswoman for the reform communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) told Reuters.

Five PDS parliamentary deputies, including the party's floor leader Gregor Gysi and former East German Premier Hans Modrow, were in the court to hear the verdict.

Prosecutors have tried to put East German political leaders on the stand for human rights abuses but legal twists have slowed their moves and age or illness have left many ousted Communists unfit for trial.

Former East German leader Erich Honecker was allowed to leave for Chile after he was judged to be too ill to stand trial.

Mr. Honecker has been taken to the hospital, an official of the private clinic treating him in Santiago said Monday.

Mr. Honecker, the man responsible for the Berlin Wall, arrived in Chile in January after a German court ended a manslaughter trial against him, saying he was suffering from terminal liver cancer and had only six months to live.

The official declined to give further information, but said the clinic would issue a medical bulletin later.

Mother challenges Pakistani premier in fued

KARACHI, Pakistan (R) — Nusrat Bhutto, mother of Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Monday challenged her overthrow by her daughter as head of the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP), saying she was the target of a conspiracy.

The prime minister's effective internal party coup against her mother, chairwoman of the PPP since 1977, brought into the open a family fued that has been simmering since Benazir's brother, Mir Murtaza Bhutto, returned from exile last month.

"No one can remove me," said the 63-year-old widow of Pakistan's first popularly elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

"I was nominated as chairperson for life by my husband, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and will not allow anybody to throw his decision into the dustbin," she told a news conference.

In a meeting Sunday in the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore, the PPP Central Executive Committee unanimously elected Benazir as chairwoman and offered her estranged mother the post of patron.

Several committee members later privately voiced discontent at Benazir's decision to ram through her election without preparation or consultation.

Nusrat said she was not invited to the committee meeting, for the first time since her husband named her to take over the party leadership after his overthrow in a 1977 military coup.

"It was a conspiracy," Nusrat said, accusing three of her daughter's closest advisers of being in on the plot.

She said most members of the present committee had joined hands with or supported the late military-sponsored President Mohammad Zia-Ul-Haq, blamed for the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on disputed charges of conspiracy to murder in 1979.

Nusrat said she would consult supporters and party workers before taking further action but would demand internal party elections, not held since 1967.

She said her eldest daughter telephoned her late Sunday to inform her of the party's decision and told her the action was taken because Nusrat had sided with Murtaza, who is in jail facing terrorism charges.

"She (Benazir) feared that I might try to make Mir Murtaza the next chairman of the PPP," Nusrat said, adding that in a Muslim society a son was usually regarded as the heir.

"I wanted to do so but Murtaza does not want to be chairman," she said. "He wants his sister to continue as the chairperson and the prime minister."

Nusrat Bhutto has become increasingly estranged from her eldest daughter since her only surviving son was arrested on terrorism charges after his return from 16 years of self-imposed exile last month.

She had campaigned on his behalf, helping him win a seat in the assembly of the southern province of Sind in October.

"I now regret my decision to make Benazir the co-chairperson of the party in 1986," Nusrat said. Benazir assumed the post on her return from exile after martial law was lifted in 1986.

At least 5 killed in Sarajevo shelling

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — At least five people were killed and 19 injured Monday when shells slammed into a market near Sarajevo's main cemetery and in the city centre eyewitnesses and hospital sources said.

A photographer with the European Photo Agency (EPA) reported at least four dead in the shelling of the market, in the north of the capital.

Sarajevo Radio said another person was killed and five hurt when shells rained on the centre of the city, which is besieged by Bosnian Serb forces.

The city's main Kosevo Hospital reported having admitted 19 wounded by 12:30 p.m. (1100 GMT).

Meanwhile the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was dragged into a row Monday with the Bosnian government over the continuing military successes of rebel Muslim leader Fikret Abdic.

A spokesman denied the government's claim that UNPROFOR had helped the rebel offensive in the northwestern Muslim enclave of Bihac by aiding the passage of Mr. Abdic's men through the neighbouring Serb-held Krajina area of Croatia.

The Bosnian government protested Sunday to General Francis Briquemont, commander of the United Nations Forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

UNPROFOR spokesman Lt.-Col. Bill Aikman insisted that French troops stationed in Bihac had acted impartially.

Troops loyal to Mr. Abdic had advanced several kilometres in the east and west of the enclave over the weekend, Col. Aikman said. Two attacks were still in progress, one in the direction of the town of Bihac and the other to the north in the town of Cazin.

Col. Aikman said the development was an important one as the rebels could only have outflanked government troops in the west by passing through Serb-held Krajina.

He could not confirm Bosnian media accusations that Mr. Abdic had been aided in the offensive by Serb artillery.

Elsewhere in Bosnia, two people were killed and two wounded in a Serb artillery assault on the Muslim-held village of Teocak in northeast Bosnia, Sarajevo Radio said Monday.

The radio said the Muslim-held enclaves of Maglaj and Tesanj in north Bosnia came under artillery fire Sunday.

The Bosnian Serb News Agency (SRNA) accused the Muslims of attacking Serbs Sunday in the nearby Doboj area.

In the southern city of Mostar, Bosnian Croat shelling killed one and wounded three in the besieged Muslim quarter on the east side of the Neretva River, Sarajevo Radio said Monday.

Croatian News Agency (HINA) reported clashes Monday morning between Croats and Muslims north of Sarajevo at Zepce.

On Sunday fighting intensified between Bosnian Serbs and Muslims on battle fronts north of Sarajevo as political leaders prepared to resume talks on a peace settlement to the 20-month-old civil war.

Meanwhile Bosnian government forces admitted that five of their men were killed and 12 wounded in Bihac, but casualties were thought to be higher and Mr. Abdic's army also sustained heavy losses, it said.

Yeltsin flies to Caucasus ethnic cauldron

MOSCOW (Agencies) — President Boris Yeltsin flew to Russia's volatile south Monday to meet the leaders of feuding Caucasian peoples who fought territorial battles late last year.

Mr. Yeltsin's foray to the country's most unstable region was a bold stroke just six days before parliamentary elections and a referendum on his draft new constitution, which has won him few friends among the ethnic-based republics there.

"There is a whole tangle of problems here, ethnic as well as territorial conflicts," Interfax News Agency quoted the Kremlin leader as saying on arrival in North Ossetia.

"Extremism is also a worry. I believe we must all search together for a solution to this drawn-out conflict."

Mr. Yeltsin quickly left by helicopter to tour parts of North Ossetia and neighbouring Ingushetia, where at least 200 people were killed in territorial clashes in November 1992.

He was accompanied by the heads of all three "power ministries" — defence, interior and security — in a sign of the importance the Kremlin attaches to the visit.

Moscow was curiously bereft of political leaders, with Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin in hospital with Kidney stones and several other top ministers taking leave to campaign for Sunday's elections.

A government spokesman said Mr. Chernomyrdin, 55, had an attack of colic Saturday and cancelled a trip to Italy due to start Monday. His health was not seriously in danger.

Nearly 3,000 kilometres away in Russia's Arctic North, coal miners sent a danger signal to the government by resuming a strike over pay and conditions.

Tens of thousands of miners went on strike at 12 of the 13 mines in the former penal colony of Vorkuta, journalists said.

The government had tried hard to avert a strike, sending Economics Minister Yegor Gaidar to Vorkuta to meet the miners, and negotiating inconclusively with their leaders in Moscow.

Miners say they have not received their salaries for several months, a situation the government blames on the failure of industrial enterprises to settle their debts to the mines.

Trade union officials said individual mines in the Urals had also stopped work, while workers in the Siberian Kuzbass and the northern region of Inta were considering joining the protest.

Mr. Yeltsin's visit to the Caucasus follows his decision last week to extend a state of emergency in parts of North Ossetia and Ingushetia because of continuing unrest.

A statue of Soviet state founder Vladimir Lenin was blown up in the Ossetian capital, Vladikavkaz, at the weekend. It was not clear who was responsible.

The Caucasus, a mountainous region inhabited by numerous tribes, was conquered by Russia in the 19th century only after decades of struggle with warrior groups.

Meanwhile, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev predicted Sunday that a "very fragmented" and short-lived parliament would emerge from next week's elections in Russia.

"I believe we are going to have a parliament in which many deputies behave in a very independent way and a very fragmented parliament as a result of that," Mr. Gorbachev said as he arrived in Aberdeen, Scotland, to begin a six-day tour of Britain.

"I would also predict this parliament will probably not have a very long history," he told journalists at Aberdeen Airport.

Mr. Gorbachev, who is accompanied by his wife Raisa, will address a conference in Aberdeen in eastern Scotland before going on to Edinburgh, London, Bristol and Oxford.

In the capital, he will lunch Tuesday with Lady Thatcher the former prime minister and will meet Prime Minister John Major Wednesday at 10 Downing Street.

On Wednesday evening, he will be guest of honour at a 2,000 seat dinner-debate for which tickets priced at £15 to £25 ($22 to $37) are selling like hot cakes.

The Gorbachev conferences will deal with topics as different as communication, industry or the future of Europe.

NEWS IN BRIEF

More letter bombs explode in Austria

VIENNA (R) — A letter bomb exploded in a Vienna law office Monday seriously injuring a clerk in the ninth such attack in the past four days, Austrian Television said. Police said they were checking reports a 10th letter bomb had exploded in a residential area. The attacks are apparently directed at people or groups active on behalf of foreigners and minorities. Police earlier found a letter bomb in mail addressed to Women's Affairs Minister Johanna Dohnal at the Federal Chancellery, which also houses the offices of Chancellor Franz Vranitzky and Foreign Minister Alois Mock. The attacks began Friday when two letter bombs exploded and injured their recipients, a Roman Catholic priest and a Croatian-born television presenter, both active in human rights and refugee affairs. Police alerted all possible targets not to open suspicious mail and, over the weekend, three further letter bombs were intercepted and defused. But on Sunday, Vienna Mayor Helmut Zilk opened a package in his study and detonated a device, almost destroying his left hand. Mr. Zilk was reported to be out of danger following a four-hour emergency operation.

Gunmen kill 2 Belfast Catholics

DUBLIN (R) — Protestant gunmen killed two Belfast Catholics, one a 15-year-old boy, in an attack that Ireland said underlined the need to clinch an elusive peace agreement under negotiation with Britain. "These cruel and senseless murders reinforce the government's determination to continue to make all efforts to once and for all find a means for ending the cycle of violence in Northern Ireland," Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring said Monday. The outlawed Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) claimed responsibility for the overnight attack, which raised the death toll by Protestant death squads to 40 this year. It threw a harsh spotlight on their strategy of killing Catholics at random to sow terror among the Catholic minority and weaken support for calls to unite the province with Ireland. The gunmen drove up to a parked taxi in the Catholic area of North Belfast's Ligoniel District and opened fire on the couple sitting in a parked taxi. Brian Duffy, 15, was killed instantly and driver John Todd, 31, died of his wounds in hospital.

Astronauts replace solar panels

HOUSTON, Texas (AFP) — Endeavour astronauts Kathy Thornton and Tom Akers Monday completed a second of five scheduled space walks after successfully equipping the Hubble telescope with two new solar panels, NASA said. They ended their walk at 1015 GMT after six hours and 30 minutes in space, achieving their objective of fitting the new panels after jettisoning one of the old ones, which had buckled. NASA ordered Thornton and Akers to ditch the panel, which was stuck in the open position, after fellow astronauts Story Musgrave and Jeff Hoffman failed in an attempt to roll it up and stow it in Endeavour's cargo bay in their first space walk Sunday. Thornton straddled the Endeavour's robot arm for 20 minutes, holding the buckled solar panel at arm's length while Tom Akers disconnected its electrical and mechanical connections. As Thornton let the panel go, Shuttle Commander Dick Covey slowly moved the craft away, leaving the panel to join some 7,000 pieces of debris from space missions, which will gradually get pulled in towards the earth and burn up on re-entering its atmosphere.

Indian security braces for trouble on Ayodhya anniversary

AYODHYA, India (R) — Police went on alert across India Monday, prepared for trouble on the first anniversary of the destruction of a mosque which unleashed ferocious violence.

There was little trouble, despite Muslim strikes and thwarted Hindu celebrations, least of all in the northern town of Ayodhya where the mosque was razed by Hindu zealots using their bare hands and crowbars on Dec. 6, 1992.

But police said they were investigating whether an apparently coordinated series of bombs on four trains in different parts of the country, which killed one person and injured 22 Monday, was connected to the anniversary.

The demolition of the 16th century Ayodhya mosque, which many Hindus believe stood on the birthplace of their god Lord Rama, set off nationwide violence. More than 2,000 people died, most of them from the 120 million Muslim minority in a largely Hindu nation of 890 million.

In March, bombs killed about 250 people in Bombay, India's commercial capital where the violence was worst. Police said they were planted by Muslims taking revenge for the bloodshed.

Senior policemen in Delhi said it was possible Monday's train bombs were the work of Muslim activists marking the anniversary, but there was no immediate evidence as to who was responsible.

The worst toll was in Hyderabad, capital of Andhra Pradesh state, where one person died and 14 people were hurt by a bomb that exploded on a Delhi-/bound train as it left the southern city whose heart is dominated by Muslims.

In Adhra Pradesh, Muslims called a strike to mark what they called a "black day." Police said it was fairly peaceful, though one person was injured when police opened fire on a mob trying to set a bus ablaze.

The army staged shows of force in the neighbouring state of Karnataka and police made many arrests to prevent Hindu celebrations of the anniversary.

In Bombay, more than 300 people were arrested to prevent trouble and many Muslims closed their businesses, as they did in Ayodhya and nearby Faizabad to mark the anniversary.

In Ayodhya, only about 5,000 people gathered to listen to Hindu nationalists who insist they would build a grand temple to Lord Rama on the site of the mosque, razed when about 200,000 Hindus gathered for what were supposed to be religious ceremonies.

Nearby, thousands of paramilitary troopers were on the alert, but they remained in their barracks with no signs of trouble among nationalists whose mood was sombre.

They appeared to be licking their wounds after serious setbacks to their parliamentary flag-bearer, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in five regional elections just ended.

HIV-positive man jailed for donating blood

MELBOURNE (R) — A man who donated blood when he knew he had the HIV virus which causes AIDS was sentenced to 16 months in jail by an Australian court Monday. Melbourne magistrate's court was told the 34-year-old man, who cannot be named for legal reasons, had signed a declaration at a blood bank saying he had no reason to believe he had AIDS or the virus that caused AIDS. The man, who was diagnosed HIV-positive seven years ago, pleaded guilty to making a false statement. The court was told routine tests had discovered the infectious blood. The man's lawyer said his client was under the influence of heroin at the time and did not know what he was doing.

Pay as you go

BEIJING (R) — To tip or not to tip? It's a question few bothered to ask during China's first 40 years of Socialist construction, when tipping was banned as bourgeois. Not so in the brave, new and capitalistic world of the "Socialist market economy." Shanghai's luxury hotels are putting contract attendants in their lavatories and, in an revival of pre-revolutionary practice, are allowing them to accept tips. The toilet attendants will not be paid by the hotels. The prevailing economic theory — in some Shanghai toilets at least — is "pay as you go."

The holes of history

BEIRUT (R) — Beirut's Archaeological Museum, once one of the most important in the Middle East, has reopened for the first time in 18 years, laying bare a scene of cultural devastation that needs millions of dollars to repair. Shell holes, bullet marks and even a sniper's peephole knocked through a wall scar the exhibition halls. Damp spreads down walls from freshly repaired holes in the roof. Militiamen's graffiti are still visible. Concrete blocks which stand like massive tombs in the empty halls make the museum look like a vast funeral vault. The blocks encase priceless statues, sphinxes and sarcophagi from Egypt, Rome and Phoenicia — the Lebanon of antiquity.

Hurd hails Prince Charles as star

LONDON (R) — Prince Charles is a star and Britain must make better use of his gifts, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said. "I have seen him in action in many different circumstances and he is a star. He would be a star even if he were not the Prince of Wales." Mr. Hurd's words will fuel speculation that the British establishment has embarked on a campaign to help the prince, who scores poorly in opinion polls, burnish his image and assert himself as the future king. Some papers saw Princess Diana's surprise decision to cut back her public role as a devious palace plot to remove her from the spotlight so her estranged husband could shine.

Broke? then drink — don't think

KAMPALA (R) — Ugandans spend three times as much money on beer as on education, a government report says. The survey by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning said an average worker spent two per cent of income on educational and six per cent on alcohol. Economic experts blamed this on a government squeeze on spending in a bid to clamp down on inflation: "There is so little money to invest in profit-making ventures, so the money is invested socially — in drinking," said a professor at Makerere University, near Kampala. Uganda's income per capita is estimated at less than $200.

Auntie Beeb considers star treatment

LONDON (R) — The BBC said it was considering plans for a Disney-style theme park featuring some of its most famous television programmes: "We are looking at the feasibility of a theme park — it may or may not happen," a BBC spokeswoman said. Britain's Mail On Sunday newspaper said the park would feature replica sets, stunt men and special effects. It also said the BBC might move parts of its children's television production to the park so people could watch them being filmed. Reports have said the venture could cost $150 million, and was the idea of the owners of Madame Tussaud's waxworks.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Tomba wins both legs in Quebec

STONEHAM, Quebec (AP) — Alberto Tomba fought off a nerve-racking false start and showed he can still be king of the hill. Tomba, who won both legs of the race, finished the men's World Cup Slalom Sunday in one minute 47:57 seconds after his second run was interrupted at the first gate when he heard someone yelling at him. "I heard somebody on my right side say 'stop, stop, stop, stop'," he said after the race. Tomba was allowed to start again but the Italian wasn't happy about having to climb back up to the start house. "I'm a little angry," he said. Tomba carved his way through heavy and wet snow to master the 65-gate course. Austrian Thomas Stanassinger finished second in 1:47:69, followed by Jure Kosir of Slovenia at 1:48:47. Stangassinger and Kosir had finished first and third respectively at last weekend's slalom season-opener in Park City, Utah. Victory was sweet for Tomba, who failed to finish at Park City after falling. It also took some pressure off him. "I am more relaxed now," he said in halting English. After Sunday's race, Austrian Guenther Mader, who finished 10th, still leads the overall men's World Cup standings, followed by Kjetil Andre Aamodt of Norway and Stangassinger.

Aouita continues to chase records

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Almost a decade after his greatest triumph, Moroccan middle-distance runner Said Aouita continues to chase world records. Aouita, who won the 5,000 metre gold medal at the Los Angeles Olympic Games, said Monday that he is aiming to break the 3,000 metres indoors world record early in the new year. Aouita, 34, currently is doing hgh-altitude training in Australia during the northern hemisphere winter and taking part in tne experiment into the effects of high-altitude work. "I will train hard for March to beat the world record, if not then maybe I'll stop," Aouita said in an interview with Australian Associated Press. The current 3,000 metres indoor mark of seven minutes 37.31 seconds was set in Seville, Spain, by Kenyan Moses Kiptanui in February. Aouita, the current 5,000 metres world record holder, has said he only plans to compete for another 12 months but then wants to work with young Moroccan athletes. "Our first objective is the 1996 Olympics," he said. "I would like to have three athletes qualify at each distance, the 800, 1,500 and 5,000." Aouita said runners like current Olympic 10,000 metres champion Khalid Skah and 1988 Olympic 10,000 metres gold medallist Brahim Boutaib had led the way in Moroccan track and field. "But we also have a lot of younger athletes who can do better than Skah of Boutayeb," he said.

S. Korean women break skating records

TOKYO (R) — Two South Korean women broke world records in the speed skating short track 1,000 metres and 3,000 metres on the final day of the Asia Cup Skating Competitions in Asahikawa, northern Japan, Monday. Chun Lee-Kyung clocked one minute 35.83 seconds in the final of the 1,000 metres, eclipsing her own previous mark of 1:37.19, set in Beijing in March this year. About an hour later, her compatriot Won Hye-Kyung set the day's second world mark of 5:17.59 in a 3,000-metre heat, shattering the previous record of 5:18.33 set by Italy's Maria Rosa Candido in Budapest in January 1988.

Hidalgo gets French players' vote

PARIS (AFP) — France's professional football players Union (UNFP) called for former national coach Michel Hidalgo to be elected as president of the French Football Federation here Monday. The call follows the resignation of former President Jean Fournet-Fayard in the wake of France's shock elimination for the World Cup finals. Hidalgo, France's most successful manager of recent years, led the country to the European Championships in 1984 and to the World Cup semi-finals in 1982 and 1986.

Roche tipped as Australian tennis captain

SYDNEY (R) — Tony Roche emerged as the favourite Monday to replace Australia's Davis Cup captain Neale Fraser, according to the Australian media. "Tony would be my only choice. He has the experience," John Newcombe, who won 12 Grand Slam doubles titles with Roche in the 1960s and 1970s, told the Daily-Telegraph Mirror newspaper. "There will be several contenders but he would be my man for the job," Newcombe said. Fraser, 60, announced his retirement as captain Sunday, after 23 years in the post, following Australia's 4-1 defeat by Germany in the Duesseldorf final. Roche was also the favourite for the job among the Australian tennis officials and players at the the final. Australian Associated Press (AAP) reported. Roche, who won the singles title at the French Open in 1966, told the newspaper he was considering applying for the post. "I will certainly think about it. I want to look at all the options before making a decision," said Roche, an Australian Davis Cup selector, who played in the competition between 1964 and 1978.

Asian athletics meet is hit by poor results

MANILA (Agencies) — Lacklustre performances marked the Asian Athletics Championships in Manila last week with sporting powers China, Japan and South Korea turning the meet into nothing more than a trial run for the Asian Games in 1994.

A change in the schedule of the championships, held this year from Nov. 30-Dec. 4, might be necessary so the biennial competition will not lapse into irrelevancy, officials said.

No new Asian records were set in the competition. The only new marks set were Asian Athletics Championships.

A senior Philippine Athletics official said the Asian championships would have to find a way to refine its schedule because Asia's top track stars were timing to be at their peak form for the lucrative Grand Prix circuit in Europe.

"If we don't change, we will always get these athletes at the end of the season and the quality of the competition may be damaged as a result," the official said.

The Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association chief, Go Teng Kok, said Saturday that poor times had been expected because Asian track stars had just finished competing in the World Championships in Stuttgart and the European Grand Prix circuit.

"We had no choice about the poor results, we knew all along that the athletes would not be at their best," Go said.

China romped home with 23 of the 41 golds on offer and their attitude was epitomised by Qu Yunxia, world record holder for the women's 1,500 metre run.

"I did not come here to break (world) records, just win (a gold) medal," she said after easily blitzing the field to romp home with the gold in the women's 3,000 metre run.

Wang Junxia, world record holder for the women's 3,000 metre and 10,000 metre run, off at an easy pace and still lapped almost every other runner in the field in the 10,000 metre race.

Despite the lackadaisical effort of the Chinese, the gap between them and the rest of Asia remained huge.

The next countries in the medals table, South Korea and Kazakhstan, trailed badly behind with only three golds apiece.

Japan, on the other hand, has practically ignored the championships. Team officials said Tokyo has now made it a policy to just send its junior team to the Asian Athletics Championships to acquire competitive experience.

The senior squad stayed home so their training regimen for the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima would not disrupted, a Japanese official said.

After winning 19 golds and emerging as the overall medal winner when Tokyo staged the championships in 1981, Japan won only two gold medals in Manila, the second medal was in the last event, the 4×400 metre men's relays.

"China has become very strong while we have gone down," Yuko Maeda, a coach of the Japanese team, said.

The next Asian Athletics championships are scheduled to be held in Jakarta from Sept. 21-24.

Meanwhile, Wang, who has enjoyed unrivalled running success at an incredible spread this year, was voted Sports Personality of the Year by China's sporting press Monday.

Wang was selected ahead of heavyweight boxing champion evander Holyfield of the United States, Italian soccer star Roberto Baggio, British sprinter Linford Christie and American tennis star Pete Sampras by the Sports Daily and the Five Rings magazine.

Wang, 20, became the first woman to run the 10,000m in under 30 minutes in Beijing in September after winning the world title the following month in Stuttgart.

Wang, who later won the World Marathon Cup in October, broke the 10,000m record by a massive 42 seconds and also set a new record at 3,000m. She also run the second-fastest 1,500m.

She is coached by Ma Junren at high altitude in the northeastern province of Liaoning.

"Ma's army" won golds at 1,500m, and 10,000m in Stuttgart and three weeks later set world records at all three distances.

He says hard training at altitude and a diet which includes turtle soup and an elixir made up of caterpillar fungus turns his women into world-beaters.

Many people have been unable to avoid the comparison with East Germany which for 20 years hid its drugs secrets behind the Berlin Wall. Now most of their fabulous women athletes and swimmers have been exposed as drugs cheats.

China is now ready to share some of its envied secrets with the rest of the world.

A training centre scheduled to be set next year in Liaoning province will be open to foreign athletes, starting with other Asians, said Ma.

"Top level runners from all Asia and the world will be welcome," said Ma.

World athletics chief Primo Nebolo, attending the Manila games, said tests have disproved the doping charges.

"Some peoply may be surprised at the good results, but they are not surprising us," he said, adding that "the great surprise in the future of sports will be China," which was close to 1.2 billion people and a sophisticated national sports programme.

AC Milan upstage rivals

PARIS (AFP) — AC Milan gained the upper hand in the Italian League Sunday as they knocked Parma off top spot when a Florin Raducioiu goal earned them a 1-0 win over Torino.

Ten-man Sampdoria, who drew 1-1 at Genoa with a David Platt equaliser a minute before the break, are now a point adrift of the defending champions.

Cup Winners' Cup champions Parma are now two points behind Milan as they slipped up 2-0 at AS Roma.

Sampdoria were schocked after just 35 seconds when Gennaro Ruotolo scored for Genoa, though Platt pulled one back on the rebound following Attilio Lombardo's initial shot.

Dutchman Ruud Guilt never got into this stride, but worse for Sampdoria Roberto Mancini was sent off in the 63rd minute for a violent tackle.

Parma began the day on top on goal difference but were in trouble as soon as the 16th minute, when Antonio Comi opened the scoring. A second-half goal from Cappioli settled the result.

Juventus stayed on top throughout a 1-0 win over visitors Napoli, courtesy of defender Andrea Fortunato, who scored from more than 20 yards in the 27th minute.

However, there were incidents away from the pitch when seven people, including a policeman, were slightly injured in scuffles before and during the match.

Inter Milan, who face England's Norwich in the UEFA Cup in midweek, won 3-1 at bottom-club Lecce.

Dutchman Dennis Bergkampf opened in the first half before three goals came in the final ten minutes, two from Inter's Russian forward Igor Shalimov.

Lazio, still without English international Paul Gascoigne who is on the verge of a comeback after achiles tendon problem, drew 1-1 away with Atalanta.

In Spain, Brazilian international Bebeto scored for Deportivo LA Coruna in their 1-0 win over Racing Santander to put them of the table.

But Bebeto left in late — the 92nd minute — before settling the issue.

Barcelona, reduced to 10 men, could only draw 2-2 against Logrones in front of 50,000 spectators at the Nou Camp Stadium. They dropped back a point behind La Coruna.

With one eye on Wednesday's Champions' League match against Monaco, Barcelona failed to impress, particularly after the dismissal of Miguel Angel Nadal in the 20th minute.

Brazil's Romario and Ronald Koeman scored for Barcelona, while Oleg Salenko and Erana replied for the visitors.

Atletico Madrid did well to force a 1-1 draw at Oviedo after Juan Vizcaino was sent off in the 55th minute, though Oviedo had Jorge Sabas sent off in the last minute.

Real Madrid continued their mid season recovery as they beat Athletic Bilbao 2-1 Sunday to move up to third spot.

Eintracht Frankfurt finally fell from the top of the German championship following their fourth loss in a row — 1-0 at defending champions Werder Bremen.

Eintracht are now second on goal difference and only two points now separate the first seven teams as the race for the title hots up.

New Zealand striker Wynton Rufer scored the only goal of the game as Bremen ended a run of seven matches without victory in front of 25,000 spectators in the northern port town.

Bayer Leverkusen's 1-1 draw with Bayern Munich was enough to move into top spot. Leverkusen's Rene Rydlewicz gave them hope of an outright win as he found the target in the 52nd minute. But Bayern's Burno Labbadia levelled the scores six minutes later in the Bavarian capital.

The grumblings at Frankfurt can only now increase and coach Klaus Toppmoeller will be looking for success in Wednesday's UEFA Cup third round tie to divert attention from their terrible domestic form. Eintracht lead Spain's Deportivo La Coruna 1-0 after the first leg.

A ray of hope for Frankfurt is the expected return of Anthony Yeboah in the new year. Their Ghanaian striker, who had a knee operation, was the league's top scorer last season.

Paris Saint Germain's first victorfy at Lille for nearly 20 years helped them stay well clear at the top of the French championship.

Brazilian international Rai scored before the break and Xavier Gravelaine added another in injury time to break the long winless streak with their 2-0 win.

Second-placed Bordeaux beat Le Havre 2-1 to remain four points adrift, but Monaco are now eight points behind the leaders following their 2-1 loss at Toulouse to an 89th minute goal. Marseille's 3-1 win at Cannes moved them to third — a place above Monaco.

PSG's George Weah beat two men before laying the ball off to David Ginola wide on the left. Ginola's cross found Rai, who made no mistake for the opening goal in the 34th minute.

PSG, now unbeaten in their last eight away matches, had had 14 defeats and four draws in the northern French town till Rai upset the sequence.

Bordeaux, as expected, beat lowly Le Havre 2-1 as they retained their unbeaten home record.

However Rolland Courbis had national matters on his mind over the weekend as he offered to take on the job of French national coach on a pay-per-win basis.

Youri Djorkaeff went to the top of the goal scoring charts as he converted from the spot for 10-man Monaco. His 38th minute penalty brought his tally to 12, one more than Nicolas Ouedec of Nantes.

But Monaco, who had to work hard after Claude Puel was sent off in the 15th minute for a professional foul, paid the price.

Eric Lada equalised for Toulouse, and Michael Debeve hit the 89th minute winner in off the crossbar following good work by Anthony Bancarel.

Feyernoord went two points clear at the top of the Dutch League Sunday with a 1-1 draw at home to Utrecht. But should Ajax Amsterdam win at Heerenveen, they will climb up to pole position.

Anderlecht kept four points of FC Brugge in the Belgium standings as both teams won. Anderlecht, 23-times national champions, beat Gent 2-1, while FC Brugge ousted RC Genk by a similar score.

In Scotland, striker Gordon Durie, Glasgow Rangers' new £1 million ($1.49 million) striker, hit the goals which catapulted the title holders into an undisputed Scottish Premier League lead.

The former Tottenham player showed that Rangers' substantial investment might yet prove to be a bargain with strikes in each half as the champions won 2-0 at Motherwell.

Durie's first goals for the club hoisted Rangers two points clear of second-placed city arch-rivals Celtic, who beat St. Johnstone 1-0, and also Motherwell.

Durie's debut strike arrived in the 37th minute after a period of aimless play from both teams. Motherwell captain Chris McCart misjudged a long ball and that was the invitation Durie needed to wrong-foot the keeper and tap the ball into an empty net.

Rangers clinched victory when a smooth, intricate move in the 61st minute gave David Robertson space to roam on the left. He sent in a near-post cross and Durie was lurking to depsatch a glancing header into the net.

A Celtic substitution secured the points in a scrappy match against injury-hit St. Johnstone.

When Celtic brought on striker Frank McAvennie, Brian O'Neil was pushed wide on the right and his powerful, running cross set up the winner.

Pat McGinlay was credited with the 68th minute goal although Andy Rhodes appeared to have the danger covered until a wicked deflection took the ball away from him.

Man. United boss signs new contract

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United boss Alex Ferguson has become the highest-paid manager in British football.

His reward for winning the English title last season and guiding United into a 12-point lead in this term's premiership is a new four-year contract worth more than a million pounds.

The 51-year-old Scot, who has been at Old Trafford for seven years, told the Mail On Sunday newspaper: "I was very happy to extend my agreement.

"I don't know what the future holds, but I'm certainly looking to end my managerial career with United.

"These are magnificent times for the club and hopefully we can build on the base we've created and bring the supporters even more success."

Meanwhile, Howard Kendall was clearing out his desk at Everton and still refusing to explain the reasons for his shock decision to resign as the premiership side's manager Saturday.

"It's an emotional day for me," said the 47-year-old. "I've come in this morning to clear up, which again is very disappointing for me.

"But what is more important is Everton Football Club. I'm sure they'll be successful in the very near future."

Former England and Everton midfield player Peter Reid, who was sacked as Manchester City's manager earlier this season, is the strong favourite to replace Kendall. Reid is currently on Southampton's books as a player.

Everton Sunday named reserve team boss Jimmy Gabriel as caretaker manager while they began their search for a long-term replacement for Kendall.

Chairman David Marsh said: "The board of directors were as surprised as everyone else connected with the club by Mr. Kendall's decision to leave at this time.

"They would wish to place on record their appreciation and thanks to Howard for his efforts over the two terms of his managership to bring the success to the club that all Evertonians crave.

Niemann fast on Olympic track

HAMAR, Norway (AFP) — Gunda Niemann of Germany broke the women's 5,000m world record at a World Cup Speedskating Competition here Monday when she timed 7min 13.29 sec. She clipped 0.84sec off Dutchwoman Yvonne Van Gennip's previous best set at the 1988 Olympics in Calgary, Canada. It was the third world record set on the 1994 Olympic track. American Dan Jansen improved his 500m time with 35.92sec to become the first man to break the 36sec barrier and Norwegian Johan Olav Koss broke his own 5,000m mark with a time of 6:35.53.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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THE BEST-LAID PLANS GO AGLEY

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ A 8 7 6 4 3
♡ K
◇ A K J 7
♣ K 10

WEST
♠ J 10 9 5 2
♡ 9 7 2
◇ 8 2
♣ 7 6 3

EAST
♠ K
♡ Q J 10 6 5 4
◇ 9 6
♣ A J 9 8

SOUTH
♠ Q
♡ A 8 3
◇ Q 10 5 4 3
♣ Q 5 4 2

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♠	2 ♡	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	3 ♡	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ◇	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ◇	Pass
6 ◇	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: Two of ◇

The IRS would have loved Cardinal Morton, Henry VII's tax collector. If a merchant lived well, it showed he was affluent and could afford to pay a high tax. If he lived frugally, he had to be saving large sums, and so he, too, could afford to be taxed heavily. Bridge players remember the Cardinal because of the Morton's Fork Coup.

South's suits were not good enough to introduce freely at the three-level. When North reopened the bidding, South first cue-bid as a general probe, then he bid the diamond suit and an excellent slam was reached.

There would have been no problem had declarer been able to establish dummy's spades. Declarer received the bad news after winning the trump lead in dummy, cashing the ace of spades and ruffing a spade. Fortunately, the bidding had blueprinted an alternate path.

Since the overcall marked East with the ace of clubs, declarer crossed to dummy with the king of hearts and led the ten of clubs. East was impaled on Morton's fork. Rising with the ace would present declarer with two club tricks and permit declarer to get home by ruffing a heart and a club in dummy, so East followed low. Declarer's queen won, the table's king of clubs disappeared on the ace of hearts, and declarer crossruffed merrily, using the board's three trumps to ruff two clubs and a heart. At the end, declarer had to concede a club, but that was the only trick for the defense.

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Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD '2'
For Ever Young
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Shaath: Agreement possible by Dec. 13

CAIRO (AP) — The chief Palestinian negotiator to peace talks with Israel said Monday that it is still possible the two sides can resolve their differences by their Dec. 13 deadline. "Things are by and large continuing, I think with a chance of finishing on time," negotiator Nabil Shaath said in a phone interview. Dr. Shaath said Israeli and Palestinian negotiators working out details of the withdrawal will exchange drafts Wednesday in Cairo on the overall shape of Palestinian autonomy, confirming a report Monday in the Israeli daily Haaretz. "Two drafts are in the making, ours and theirs," Dr. Shaath said. "They don't signal agreement. We're moving from item-by-item negotiation into the exchanging of full drafts because we are coming that close." Dr. Shaath said the talks in Cairo were still deadlocked over the question of how large a territory the Palestinians will govern in Jericho and who will control border crossings to Egypt and Jordan. He terms as "speculation" reports from the Gaza Strip that some 3,500 prisoners would be released soon, possible within a week. Palestinians have been pushing Israel for a timetable for freeing some 10,000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

W. Bank deportees say talks ignore them

AMMAN (R) — Palestinian deportees urged the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Monday to block a self-rule accord with Israel unless it assured their right to return to homes throughout the occupied West Bank. "We urge the PLO leadership to instruct its negotiators in Cairo to demand our return to our homes in Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, Bethlehem .... since this is a right guaranteed by international law and ignored by the negotiators," said a statement from a deportees' committee in Jordan. Bashir Nafe, a deportees' spokesman, told Reuters: "We feel that the issue of West Bank deportees has been ignored although PLO negotiators in Cairo have already settled the issue of Gazan deportees." Palestinians say Israel expelled 1,800 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the Arab-Israeli war in 1967. Around 1,300 deportees live in Jordan.

Thousands march in UAE anti-drugs rally

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Thousands of students and workers joined officials and policemen in a march Monday through the streets of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) capital to warn against drugs. "Damn drugs," read a banner at the head of the convoy which set off from Abu Dhabi's seaside. "I appeal to all of you to stand together ... to wipe out these poisons through which enemies of this nation are trying hard to destroy the young," said Mohammad Tariam, UAE's anti-drug chief. To the beating of drums, horses and camels trotted by in the first convoy of its kind in the oil-rich Gulf country, carrying policemen and others waving placards. Marches were to be held for two days in Abu Dhabi before similar rallies in the six other emirates of the UAE federation. The authorities have launched an anti-drugs campaign including seminars, films and religious sermons to heighten public awareness of the dangers of narcotics. The UAE has reported a sharp increase in drug smuggling.

Iraqi nuclear fuel flown to Russia

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A first consignment of irradiated fuel from Iraq's nuclear programme has been flown to Russia for disposal, a U.N. source said Monday. Maurizio Zifferero, assistant director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has said around 35 kilogrammes of irradiated fuel is to be transferred to Russia. A first shipment was flown out on board an Antonov-124 transport plane from Habbaniya airport west of Baghdad Sunday, the U.N. source said without specifying the quantity. "The second and final consignment will be shipped out early next year," the source said. Iraq agreed to have its irradiated nuclear fuel removed during a visit in April by Mr. Zifferero at the head of a team of nuclear inspectors.

Fundamentalists kill Egyptian policeman

ASSIUT (AFP) — Suspected militants shot dead a railway policeman as he went to work Monday in southern Egypt, police said. Hamed Mohammad Gabra was riddled with gunfire in the southern town of Qusiya, in Assiut province. He became the 77th policeman killed since fundamentalists launched their campaign last year, also attacking tourists, government officials and Coptic Christians. In another incident, a police captain was stabbed when he tried to arrest two suspected militants in a village near the southern town of Minya, police said. A plainclothes policeman with him shot the attacker, and both militants were arrested.

Afghan troops claim control of Tagob

SAROOBI (AFP) — The Afghan Defence Ministry Monday claimed to be in control of Tagob after four weeks of fighting with rival forces led by Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. "We won the war in Tagob," a Defence Ministry spokesman said. Most of Tagob, located 60 kilometres northeast of Kabul, was overrun by Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami troops last month. Afghan jets controlled by the Defence Ministry bombarded Tagob and Mr. Hekmatyar's nearby stronghold Saroobi, 70 kilometres east of Kabul. The month-long fighting between the forces of Mr. Hekmatyar and troops loyal to former Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masoud, who is allied with President Burhanuddin Rabbani, has claimed hundreds of lives in the two districts.

25 held in Iran crackdown on music

TEHRAN (AFP) — Police have arrested 25 musicians and raided four recording studios in and around the Iranian capital as part of a sweep against "decadence," Kayhan newspaper said Monday. Among those arrested last week were several singers and song writers from before the 1979 Islamic revolution, which toppled the pro-Western Shah. Kayhan said 3,000 music cassettes and 46,000 portraits of entertainers were also seized during the operation in Tehran and Karaj, 40 kilometres to the west. The studios recorded popular songs and made copies of concerts by Iranian entertainers living in exile, mostly in Los Angeles.

Briton who abducted son found in Egypt

LONDON (AFP) — A British businessman who abducted his son from the custody of his ex-wife a month ago and who is sought by police in Britain and France, is in Egypt, it was reported on Sunday. Peter Malkin, 54, seized his son Oliver on Nov. 8 as he got off a school bus at Landevant near Lorient in Western France. It was the third time he had abducted the boy who was placed in the custody of his mother Eliza Pridmore when the couple divorced. Mr. Malkin, interviewed on Sunday by ITN television channel at a hotel in the Red Sea resort of Harghada, said he wanted to return to England. "I am hoping to come back to England. Oliver wants to live with me. We are hoping to come back very soon and sort things out," Mr. Malkin said. Mr. Malkin who owns a hotel in Devonshire and a discotheque in Kent said he had taken the boy because it was "the only decision." "I was not allowed any access," he said.

Pakistanis kill Somali gunman

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Pakistani peacekeepers shot dead a Somali when they returned fire at three gunmen who shot at them, a United Nations military spokeswoman said Monday. The shootout occurred Sunday at a Pakistani-manned U.N. checkpoint in the south Mogadishu stronghold of warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed. Two of the gunmen fled when the Pakistani opened fire, but the third was killed. There were no Pakistanis casualties. Meanwhile the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) is to sell 12,500 tonnes of donated food to local Somali businessmen, a U.N. spokesman said. WFP plans to raise $4.8 million from its "monetisation programme" to fund development projects in Somalia, U.N. spokesman George Bennett said.

Syria gives early boost to Christopher's mission

Israel welcomes Syrian offer to help trace missing Israeli soldiers

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syria's goodwill gesture to help find missing Israeli soldiers gave U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher an early boost on his mission to revive peace talks between the two enemies.

Israel Monday welcomed the gesture but said it would have to wait and see if Syria had concrete information to offer.

"It is an important humanitarian gesture and I welcome it," said Mr. Christopher on Sunday after emerging from four hours of talks with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad.

Mr. Christopher, who travelled to Amman Monday for talks with His Majesty King Hussein and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, returns Thursday to Damascus for another meeting with Mr. Assad after consultations in Israel with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

He described his talks with Mr. Assad as "long, detailed and quite intense and constructive."

"I felt there was a strong desire on the part of President Assad to move forward with the peace process," Mr. Christopher added.

U.S. officials have said Mr. Christopher was carrying fresh proposals to revitalise the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Syria offered to help a U.S. congressional team, which is expected to arrive here and in Beirut next month, in determining the fate of six Israeli soldiers who have gone missing in Lebanon since 1982.

A Muslim fundamentalist official told AFP in Beirut last week that Israeli airman Ron Arad, whose plane was shot down by Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon in 1986, was "alive and detained by Syrian or Iranian intelligence services."

Mr. Christopher is to brief Mr. Rabin Tuesday on the results of his talks in Damascus on Sunday.

The Syrian-Israeli talks have been suspended since Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a peace accord on Sept. 13.

Mr. Rabin praised the Syrian offer to help clear up the fate Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon.

"I was very pleased with the U.S. initiative on missing persons. And I attach great importance to it," Mr. Rabin said. "It is a great step forward in parallel with our contacts with the PLO on this matter."

The Syrian pledge gave Mr. Christopher an early boost on his mission to coax Syria and Israel back to the negotiating table in Washington.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said, "I believe that the negotiations will resume next month, but the definitive reply will be brought to us by Christopher."

Mr. Christopher handed a message to Mr. Assad from President Bill Clinton, which said that the United States was pursuing its efforts towards a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Syria has repeatedly called for a comprehensive peace and denounced the PLO for making a separate peace initiative when it signed the autonomy accord with Israel in September.

Mr. Assad's spokesman, Gebrane Kourieh, told AFP that Mr. Assad and Mr. Christopher discussed the "best means to make the peace process advance." Mr. Assad welcomed U.S. efforts to revive the peace process and its commitment to a comprehensive and just peace, the spokesman said.

Syria expressed its desire to cooperate with Washington to achieve results in both Syria's and Lebanon's negotiations with Israel, he said.

Lebanon said it had no information on Israeli servicemen missing in the country since the 1980s.

"Until now we as a state have no information on the Israeli captives in Lebanon... including the Israeli pilot (Ron Arad)," Foreign Minister Faris Bouez told reporters.

"During the events in Lebanon (the 1975-90 civil war) state organs were absent. A lot of events took place which the state until now could not familiarise itself with to know their background," Mr. Bouez said.

In the late 1970s, Syria returned to Israel 42 Israeli prisoners of war, most of them pilots, who had been captured in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war as well as the bodies of several Israeli soldiers.

In 1985, Israel and the Palestinians exchanged prisoners at the Israeli-Syrian border in an operation overseen by Syrian military officials.

Mr. Christopher said Syria had also decided to grant exit visas to Syrian Jews who want to travel abroad. According to U.S. estimates, it will affect between 800 and 850 Jews from the 1,200-strong community.

The official press here made no mention of the Syrian offers but it gave wide coverage Monday to the message from President Clinton to Mr. Assad reaffirming Washington's determination to push forward the peace process.

Tishrin daily said that despite repeated U.S. pledges "there is no peace yet in the region and U.N. Security Council (land-for-peace) resolutions have not been implemented."

U.S. credibility was at stake, it said, unless Washington secured a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

"Syria is not asking for miracles. What Israel calls 'a tough Syrian position' is only a request to put an end to the occupation of the Golan to allow Syrians to go back to their homes there," it added.

Israel wants Syria first to commit itself to a full peace with diplomatic relations and open borders before saying how much of the Golan Heights it will withdraw from.

Yemen all but split in two again — minister

ABU DHABI (Agencies) — A political crisis between northern and southern Yemen has redivided the country, Yemeni Foreign Minister Mohammad Basandawah warned Monday.

"There is an unannounced split," he told the United Arab Emirates newspaper Al Khaleej.

"The only thing left is to declare the split. But so far, they are embarrassed to do so although, unfortunately, they are practising it," said the foreign minister, without naming names.

"When, God forbid, such a split is officially announced, I would not be surprised that some countries recognise the party which declares the secession and becomes a state."

Yemen was reunited in May 1990 after more than three centuries of separation.

But the merger faces political obstacles which have led to the current rift between President Ali Abdullah Saleh of the north and Vice President Ali Salem Al Beedh of the south.

In a bid to defuse the crisis, Mr. Saleh said Sunday that he accepted 18 of Mr. Beedh's demands for changes in the running of the country and called for talks to work out a timetable to implement the reforms.

Mr. Beedh has said he was ready to end his boycott of the authorities in Sanaa if Mr. Saleh agreed to withdraw troops from major cities, step up measures to stabilise Yemen and decentralise the government.

Asked what Yemen would do to prevent either side from seceding, Mr. Basandawah said: "We have not yet thought of any effort because we still dream of the continuation of unity.

"Secession would amount to a crime against our people and homeland, and it would undermine the greatest dream of our people. If this happens, history will never forgive the perpetrators."

Mr. Basandawah said the United States and other industrial countries were supporters of Yemen's unity because separation would serve a blow to democracy.

Algerian kidnap suspect shot dead in battle

ALGIERS (AFP) — An Algerian extremist wanted for the kidnapping of three French consular workers in October was killed in a shootout which left a police officer wounded in central Algiers on Monday, police said.

Mohammad Guezmir, 24, killed after a policeman spotted him aboard a bus near the main police station, police said.

The policeman ordered the bus driver to stop and called for reinforcements. Realising he was trapped, Mr. Guezmir took a young woman passenger hostage and shot at police officers, wounding one.

The gunman was killed as he tried to get off the bus.

Mr. Guezmir was one of the prime suspects in the kidnapping on Oct. 24 of three French diplomatic staff, who were freed by security forces at the end of that month.

One of the three, Michele Thevenot, had been given a message from the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) movement warning foreigners that they had a month to leave the country or "face sudden death."

Mr. Guezmir was a neighbour of Ms. Thevenot, her husband Jean-Claude and Alain Fressier, the three consular workers, who were abducted near the garage of their apartment block.

With Mr. Guezmir's death, the GIA lost one of its main leaders, police said.

Police were still looking Monday for other suspects named as Si Ahamad Mourad, 29, known as Djaffar Afghani, the current leader of the GIA, dJabri Rachid, 28, and Berrafta Aissa, 34.

Two foreigners, a Russian woman and a Spanish man, have been killed since that ultimatum expired at midnight on Nov. 30, while an Italian businessman was wounded in an attack here on Saturday.

Earlier Monday, suspected extremists shot dead the presiding judge of the court in the west Algerian city of Orana, local legal officials said.

S. African reform bid remains stalled

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — President F.W. de Klerk warned opponents Monday they would be foolish to boycott national elections as time was running out for them to join in reforms.

But conservative blacks and whites grouped in the Freedom Alliance failed again Monday to come to terms with Mr. de Klerk and the African National Congress (ANC).

Freedom Alliance negotiators met with government and ANC officials Monday but refused to commit themselves to the Transitional Executive Council, a multi-racial governing body formed to help run the country until elections. Its first meeting is Tuesday, and the government and ANC had hoped Monday's private talks would lead to a breakthrough.

The Freedom Alliance was holding out for promises of stronger regional autonomy under the new government to be elected in April 1994.

"They refuse to give a commitment. Unless they give a commitment, it is pointless," ANC Secretary General Cyril Ramaphosa told reporters after the meeting. "If they want to take the process forward, then they will come back to us."

"I don't know whether they (Freedom Alliance members) are serious about finding a solution," said Dawie de Villiers, a top negotiator for the governing National Party.

Freedom Alliance members said they would report back to their leaders, who would meet as early as Tuesday to make a final decision. The alliance's chief negotiator, Rowan Cronje, made it clear the group realised time was critical.

The ANC and government will proceed with reforms without the alliance's participation but have been trying to bring all groups into the process, saying this is the best way to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy.

The alliance, which includes the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party and several white, pro-apartheid groups, is united ... in opposition to the ANC, the expected leader of the next government.

RESISTANCE: Palestine boys watch an older comrade throwing stones with a slingshot at Israeli forces during clashes that erupted in a Jerusalem refugee camp Monday (AFP photo)

Four killed in occupied lands

(Continued from page 1)

man Aharon Domb said.

He said three children were lightly wounded in the attack that occurred at about 18:150 (16:15 GMT).

The latest deaths brought to 13 the number of Israelis killed by Palestinians since the Sept. 13. autonomy deal, and 31 Palestinians slain by Israeli bullets in the same period.

Palestinian fundamentalists killed two Israelis and wounded two others when their car also broke down last Wednesday near the West Bank town of El Bireh.

Meanwhile, Israeli undercover troops shot dead a member of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in front of his home in the occupied West Bank on Monday, Palestinian sources said.

Abdul Rahman Aruri was killed in Arura village north of Ramallah, the sources said.

He was among more than 400 Palestinians expelled to Lebanon on Dec. 17, 1992. repatriated on Jan. 23. He spent several months in jail.

Aruri's death brought to 1,148 the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli gunfire since the intifada began in Dec. 1987, according to an AFP toll.

The military leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Imad Akel, was shot dead by Israeli forces on Nov. 24, sparking violent protests.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) mainstream Fateh movement urged the Israeli government to discontinue its "iron-fist policy" in the occupied territories. Fateh demanded Israel disband its undercover units and call off the hunt for wanted activists.

Fateh urged Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to "disband the death and killing units or undercover units" and publicly to condemn the killing of Palestinians by Israeli soldiers, settlers and undercover units.

On Monday, Israeli police arrested about 100 Palestinians from the occupied territories in the Tel Aviv area.

The Palestinians, whose residence permits were not in order, were liable for fines of 400 shekels ($130) each and 48 hours' detention.

The army also stepped up checks on Palestinians entering Israel after a bus attack near Tel Aviv by a member of the fundamentalist Islamic Jihad group.

The assailant, from the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, had managed to infiltrate Israel armed with an assault rifle and kill a bus passenger before he was shot dead by a soldier.

Huge traffic jams built up around Jerusalem as the army carried out strict identity checks and searched cars.

The Gaza Strip and West Bank were paralysed by a strike Monday called by the Islamic Jihad to mark sixth anniversary of the intifada.

The army captured 24-year-old Ahmad Aref, a wanted member of the PLO military wing on the Gaza Strip, at the Shatti refugee camp, witnesses said.

Amid the tightened security, the chairman of the parliamentary committee of defence said, however, that he opposed a ban on entering Israel, despite Sunday's bus attack.

Fateh threatened retaliation Monday for attacks on Palestinians by soldiers and settlers.

The threat, issued by the office of Faisal Husseini, Fateh's head for the West Bank, said "terrorist action by settlers... and repression of the Palestinian population by the army" were in violation of the Israeli-PLO peace deal and "seriously threaten the peace process."

Fateh called on the government to condemn the killing of Palestinians, to disarm settlers and disband special army units who have tracked down militants.

Arafat evasive on economy accord

(Continued from page 1)

In the meantime, they say, Jordan has a genuine concern and cause to have a say in the monetary and banking affairs of the Palestinian territories.

"After all the Jordanian dinar is in circulation there, and any uncoordinated currency moves could reflect badly on Jordan," said a senior official. "We cannot just sit our arms folded and wait impassively to let things take their own course."

Unconfirmed reports said Mr. Arafat had summoned Mohammad Zuhdi Nashashibi, head of the PLO's Economic Department, to Amman to look closer into the draft economic accord. Senior PLO sources could not confirm the reports, but one of them said: "That means more delay in finalising the document."

Deputies level more criticism

(Continued from page 1)

The government also received criticism for increasing by 50 per cent the salaries of Cabinet members at a time when, deputies said, such raises should have gone to civil servants and members of the Armed Forces.

The need to support the Armed Forces was emphasised by deputies who opposed the government and those who indicated they would support it.

"I praise the government's policy statement that calls for strengthening democracy," Ajloun Deputy Ahmad Al Qudat said.

The policy statement of the government and the ability of its members were praised by deputies who said the statement was comprehensive and the ministerial team able.

"The Speech from the Throne is a policy statement that any government will be honoured to make its programme ... the prime minister is a man of principles," said deputy Nader Thuheirat (Al Kura'a), who spoke after Ms. Faisal, who said the Cabinet hid behind the popularity of the King when it adopted the speech as its policy statement.

Mr. Thuheirat and other deputies demanded that the government pay more attention to the agricultural sector and provide more services to their constituencies.

More than 30 deputies are expected to take the floor before the House ends its debate of a vote of confidence in the government, which will have to fight hard before it wins the expected narrow margin of support from the House.

The House will resume its session Tuesday. Vote is not expected before Wednesday after the government responds to the demands of deputies, many of whom said their vote will depend on the government's response to the issues they raised.

COLUMN

Tabloids say Charles wants a divorce

LONDON (R) — Princess Diana's decision to bow out of public life dominated Britain's royalty-obsessed tabloid newspapers for a third successive day Monday with reports that her estranged husband Prince Charles wants a divorce. Other reports said Queen Elizabeth had decided that heir to the throne Prince Charles, 45, should step aside and pass on the crown to his eldest son William, 11, when her reign ends. Still others said Princess Diana's period of self-imposed exile from public life, announced last Friday, would end in about six months time and that she was already mapping out a "dynamic new role" for herself on the international stage. "Charles is set to push for quickie divorce," said the Daily Mirror's headline. "Charles set for divorce," said the Daily Express while Today's version was "Charles: I want a divorce." The newspapers said the prince had told close aides that he was determined to end his stormy 12-year marriage to Princess Diana, 32. Today said the first possible date would be Dec. 9, 1994 when the couple will have been officially separated for two years. "Top royal sources said that the prince has told (Queen Elizabeth) that there will definitely be no reconciliation with Diana," Today said. "The queen has been left with little alternative but to say 'yes' to divorce when the time is right." These sources said Charles planned to reign without Princess Diana but had no plans to remarry. Public opinion polls show most Britons believe he should divorce and six out of 10 believe he should become king, whether or not he gets a divorce. But the mass circulation Sun newspaper said in a front-page report that "Prince William will be the next king instead of Charles if the queen has her way." It said the move would be unprecedented in British royal history but could win the support of the public, many of whom blame Prince Charles for the break-up with Princess Diana.

Gym owner denies photos drove Diana into retreat

AUCKLAND (AFP) — London gym owner Bryce Taylor denied here Monday that his secret photographs of Princess Diana working out in a leotard were the final straw which forced her to quit the public limelight. "I certainly don't feel my actions were the reason Princess Diana decided to withdraw from public view," Mr. Taylor told Television New Zealand's (TVNZ) Holmes Show. He said Princess Diana had been in various scraps before and he did not, for a moment, believe his photos were the last straw. Over the weekend Princess Diana said she would not be making as many public appearances, citing her continued exposure in the British media as among the reasons for withdrawing. Mr. Taylor, a New Zealander who has returned home, said there were "hidden agendas" within the royal family that were behind the withdrawal. But he now admits some regret over what has happened since. The aftermath had surpassed expectations, with extensive law suits now involved. "I do have regrets because of the aftermath, not necessarily because of what I did, but I do apologise to my family and close friends who have had to put up with a lot of flak." Mr. Taylor said the "long and boring" law case in which Princess Diana was suing him could take several years and she could win, without going to court.

'Black baby' born to Chinese couple

BEIJING (AFP) — A shocked Chinese couple has given birth to a "black baby," confounding doctors and genetic experts, a newspaper reported. The "black as ink" baby boy was born on Jan. 12, 1992 to a couple in a village of Anyi County in China's southeastern Jiangxi province, the Zhuhai Special Zone Daily said. "According to the parents (who are both yellow), there was nothing about the newborn that was different from a normal child," it said. "They did not imagine that a month later, the child would start to gradually turn black." Except for reddish hair and yellow palms and feet, the boy's body is totally black, making him a "yellow person with black skin," the paper said.